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C. S. Lewis and the Premodern Rhetorical Tradition: The Abolition of Man as Rhetoric and Philosophy of Education

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C. S. LEWIS AND THE PREMODERN RHETORICAL TRADITION:
THE ABOLITION OF MAN AS RHETORIC AND PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

A Dissertation

Submitted to the McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

Nicholas R. Pertler

December 2014

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THE ABOLITION OF MAN AS RHETORIC AND PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

By

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ABSTRACT

C. S. LEWIS AND THE PREMODERN RHETORICAL TRADITION:
THE ABOLITION OF MAN AS RHETORIC AND PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

By

Nicholas R. Pertler

December 2014

Dissertation supervised by Calvin L. Troup, Ph.D.

This interpretive project begins with the following question: How does *The Abolition of Man* by C. S. Lewis (1898-1963) function as a rhetoric and philosophy of education to open up meaningful alternatives to modern education? Although Lewis originally composed and delivered the text as three lectures in response to the felt educational concerns of his age, in its published form *The Abolition of Man* still offers relevant insight on the topic of education in contemporary times. Scholarship on Lewis has yet to fully appreciate exactly how his educational ideals align with the premodern rhetorical tradition, but this project argues that distinctive courses of action emerge by interpreting *The Abolition of Man* as a rhetoric and philosophy of education from within this framework. The premodern rhetorical tradition understands the importance of moral education for developing the habits that are necessary for practical reason and meaningful

communal interaction. However, through the worldview of scientism, modern education replaces the authority of this human tradition with the authority of method and technique. When modern education uses the authority of method and technique to replace human tradition, knowledge and values are mediated through the dictates that scientism establishes as valid. Scientism only permits knowledge and values that perpetuate its own authority, thus ignoring the ideals of the premodern rhetorical tradition because they challenge this authority. Lewis tacitly relies upon the educational ideals of the premodern rhetorical tradition to critique the amoral scientism of modern education and to revitalize classical learning attentive to moral values, virtuous action, and practical reason.

DEDICATION

To my wife, Alison

And to my children, Henry, Miriam, and Abraham

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The completion of this project would have been impossible without the support and continual encouragement of my dear wife, Alison. These pages owe a debt of gratitude to her, along with my children, Henry, Miriam, and Abraham, for the various forms of inspiration they have supplied. I also wish to acknowledge my parents, Rick and Marla, for believing in me and for together training me in the way I should go. My parents have given me the best education of all through the example of their lives. My sincere gratitude goes out to my professors in the Department of Communication & Rhetorical Studies at Duquesne University for helping me to cultivate my scholarly agenda. In particular, I owe more than I can say to my dissertation director and mentor Dr. Calvin L. Troup for his constructive contributions to this project and for his role in my overall scholarly formation. I would like to extend my appreciation to the School of Nursing at Azusa Pacific University in San Diego for allowing the context which enabled me to focus on this work. For their charity and support, I wish to recognize my debt to the rest of my friends and family; to my grandparents, siblings, extended family, and in-laws I offer a sincere thank you. Finally, I must acknowledge my profound gratitude for the writings of C. S. Lewis which, throughout the extent of this project, have never ceased to challenge and delight me.

Poway, CA

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CHAPTER ONE

C. S. LEWIS AND THE PREMODERN RHETORICAL TRADITION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This interpretive project considers how *The Abolition of Man* by C. S. Lewis functions as a rhetoric and philosophy of education to open up meaningful alternatives to modern education. Scholarly literature tends to overlook the extent to which Lewis tacitly aligns with the premodern rhetorical tradition, but interpreting his ideas of education from within this tradition offers a timely and distinct educational framework. The premodern rhetorical tradition provides Lewis with the ideals by which he both critiques the amoral *scientism* of modern education and simultaneously revitalizes an alternate standard of learning that is attentive to objective value and the practice of virtue. Lewis's awareness of scientism's tendency to undermine moral education parallels inquiries housed within the media ecology tradition, an interdisciplinary, open-system tradition which helps to establish the contemporary relevance of *The Abolition of Man's* implicit alignment with the premodern rhetorical tradition. This project argues that Lewis's basic insights are still profoundly intact; modern education continues to produce "men without chests," people systematically trained apart from the sentiments of moral education that are necessary for developing practical reason. By exposing the public implications inherent to modern education's amorality, Lewis's rhetoric and philosophy of education beseeches us to defend practical reason, a precondition for human freedom and survival, if we are to avoid the "abolition of man."

In order to substantiate the idea that *The Abolition of Man* participates in and defends the educational principles of the premodern rhetorical tradition, it is necessary to first look at some general touch points which help to frame Lewis's overall relationship to rhetoric. This chapter begins by considering how Lewis's upbringing and classical education provides him with the rhetorical sensibilities that he relies upon throughout both his writings and public addresses. These sensibilities not only permit Lewis to articulate his position on rhetoric explicitly and favorably in several of his works, but they also inspire the content and form of *The Abolition of Man*. After considering Lewis's rhetorical sensibilities, this chapter discusses how the form of *The Abolition of Man* patterns itself after the premodern rhetorical tradition's educational practice of epideictic rhetoric. Subsequently, an account of the status of rhetoric in Lewis's historical moment is offered to illuminate the context and significance of interpreting the content of *The Abolition of Man* as a rhetoric and philosophy of education. Scholarly literature that supports important elements of this project's interpretive agenda, both explicitly and implicitly, is reviewed before ending with a preview of how Lewis's rhetorical principles align with the premodern rhetorical tradition.

1.2 LEWIS'S RHETORICAL SENSIBILITIES

Clive Staples (C. S.) Lewis was a Christian intellectual of the twentieth century with rhetorical sensibilities whose diverse corpus continues to resonate with the general public and scholars alike. Lewis was born in 1898 in Belfast, Ireland, and died in 1963 of multiple complications while at his Oxford home, The Kilns. He was the second of two sons; his father was a solicitor, and his mother was the daughter of a clergyman. In the

early pages of his autobiography, *Surprised by Joy*, Lewis displays an acute awareness of his rhetorical origins: “My father’s people were true Welshmen, sentimental, passionate, and rhetorical” (3). Lewis recalls that his father “was fond of oratory” and “was fond of poetry provided it had elements of rhetoric or pathos, or both” (4). As Lewis reflects on his early years, he acknowledges that he speaks freely of his father’s “fatal bent toward dramatization and rhetoric” because it is a quality that he inherits (38). This frank acknowledgement of his heritage permits Lewis to proclaim that, among other things, he is “a congenital rhetorician” (Hooper, *Collected Letters* 444). The rhetorical sensibilities that shape Lewis’s early life are reinforced through the classical, as opposed to the scientific or modern, education he receives in his teenage years. Lewis remembers that his two greatest teachers, Harry Wakelyn Smith (“Smewgy”) and W. T. Kirkpatrick (“Kirk”), educated him in the trivium, the three foundational medieval liberal arts disciplines of grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic: “Smewgy taught me Grammar and Rhetoric and Kirk taught me Dialectic” (*Surprised* 148).

Lewis’s association with rhetoric from an early age allows him to advance explicit theoretical viewpoints on its presence and practice in several places, most notably in *A Preface to Paradise Lost*, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century*, and *The Discarded Image*. As an important example, in *A Preface to Paradise Lost*, Lewis responds to those who mistakenly label rhetoric as “manipulation” by stating, “I do not think (and no great civilization has ever thought) that the art of the rhetorician is necessarily vile. It is in itself noble, though of course, like most arts, it can be wickedly used” (50). With this theoretical statement Lewis aligns himself with the basic position of premodern rhetorical theorists such as Isocrates, Cicero, Quintilian, St. Augustine, and Giambattista Vico, all

of whom understand that rhetoric used for ill abandons its inherent moral obligation. He continues his definition of rhetoric and asserts that both rhetoric and poetry “aim at doing something to an audience. And both do it by using language to control what already exists in our minds” (50). Here, Lewis suggests that a clear distinction between rhetoric and poetry is problematic. Lewis displays his prescience years before Jeffrey Walker’s *Rhetoric and Poetics in Antiquity*, which argues that distinguishing rhetoric from poetics is a modern construct. More importantly, in opposition to accounts of rhetoric as manipulation, Lewis knows that rhetoric typically works in such a way as to influence people to act upon beliefs they already hold and accept as true.

That Lewis writes favorably about rhetoric in both his scholarly works and autobiographical accounts should be no surprise when considering the accomplishments of his public addresses in the twentieth century, some of which remain among the most influential pieces of Christian literature to this day. One such piece, *Mere Christianity*, consists of a number of chapters that were originally a series of Lewis’s radio broadcast talks organized by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) during World War II from 1941 to 1944. It is difficult to estimate the influence of these broadcast talks in their published form, for instance, in shaping the moral outlook of the past three to four generations of Christians. In many ways, *Mere Christianity* sets the contemporary spiritual agenda for a diverse range of individuals attempting to understand the particular faith of Christianity. Arguments that enter the public sphere both for and against Christianity must still contend with the things that *Mere Christianity* highlights as foundational to the faith. Even before they appear in their published form, the BBC broadcast talks elevate Lewis’s character and reputation as a capable orator to such a

degree that J. R. Lucas believes he was an obvious choice to give the Riddell Memorial Lectures at the University of Durham, which would become *The Abolition of Man*.

The setting in which Lewis delivers these three consecutive lectures, from 24 to 26 February 1943 during the university's Epiphany Term, adds to our interpretation of the text. According to Lucas, the purpose of the lectures was to "explore the relation between religion and contemporary thought" (445), and the disposition of those in attendance was such that "Lewis was reminding his audience of what they already knew, and drawing out the implications of propositions they already accepted" (447). Based upon the purpose of the lectures and audience expectation one finds that Lewis fulfills the function of a moral teacher according to his own understanding of this role. In *Mere Christianity*, Lewis states,

Really great moral teachers never do introduce new moralities: it is quacks and cranks who do that. As Dr Johnson said, 'People need to be reminded more often than they need to be instructed.' The real job of every moral teacher is to keep on bringing us back, time after time, to the old simple principles which we are all so anxious not to see. (82)

In the Riddell Memorial Lectures Lewis reminds his audience that common to virtually all premodern civilizations "is the doctrine of objective value," and with this in mind he instructs us that education must emphasize the importance of virtuous practices. Lewis's rhetoric and philosophy of education calls for the enactment of virtue in spite of a modern educational worldview that undermines traditional beliefs and values. In this sense, the ethical appeals of *The Abolition of Man* serves a function right in line with an ancient type of oratory understood as epideictic rhetoric.

1.3 LEWIS'S ETHICAL RHETORIC

Conventional descriptions of epideictic rhetoric usually start with Aristotle's *Rhetoric* (bk. 1, ch. 9), a text that highlights the ethical social purpose of epideictic rhetoric as distinguished from deliberative (political) or forensic (legal) oratory. Jeffrey Walker argues that in later antiquity "the most influential model for epideictic" comes from the *Antidosis* of Isocrates, "a 'panegyric' kind of discourse" that "deal[s] with 'philosophical' questions of large cultural and political import" (*Rhetoric and Poetics* 7). According to Walker, that which distinguishes epideictic rhetoric from deliberative and forensic in the Isocratean view depends not on content and style as much as "the nature of the audience and forum to which the discourse speaks, and the function of the discourse for that audience in that forum" (8). With deliberative and forensic rhetoric the forum is such that the audience is expected to enact policies or pass verdicts. The nature of the audience in forums conducive to epideictic rhetoric differs in that they are expected "to form opinions about and in response to the discourse presented . . . or even to revise their existing beliefs and attitudes on a given topic" (9). Understood in these terms, Walker argues that epideictic rhetoric works to either reinforce or challenge the cultural values of an audience. This means that the function of epideictic rhetoric underlies all other rhetorical forums; the effects of its discourses continue beyond the bounds of setting and thereby extend into political and legal decision making after the fact.

Walker helps us to see that premodern societies understand epideictic rhetoric as essentially moral education. Central to this project's interpretation, this is precisely the type of education that Lewis defends in *The Abolition of Man*. Of present interest,

however, is the way in which *The Abolition of Man* itself functions as epideictic rhetoric. Based upon his reputation and character, Lewis's audience assigns to him the ethical credibility (*ethos*) he needs to fulfill the necessary prerequisites for a moral teacher and epideictic rhetor. As a result, Lewis uses ethical epideictic rhetorical principles attentive to audience and forum to successfully defend educational practices that reinforce, rather than undermine, traditional value. Lewis articulates his central argument, the reality of objective value, in a manner consistent with audience expectations and conducive to historical context. *The Abolition of Man* is Lewis's epideictic rhetoric which implicitly defends the timeless educative function of epideictic rhetoric by praising virtue and blaming vice, thus inciting the audience to act accordingly so that objective value is preserved.

In his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle describes the persuasive power of an epideictic rhetor's character (*ethos*). Similarly, in "The Ethos of Epideictic Rhetoric," Dale Sullivan explains that one of the key characteristics of epideictic rhetoric is the fact that it relies primarily upon *ethos* rather than *logos* for its content. The persuasive impact upon the audience occurs by way of reminder as opposed to overt logical proof. To this end, Sullivan offers five typical characteristics that an epideictic rhetor's *ethos* must fulfill: reputation, vision, authority, presentation of good reasons, and creation of consubstantiality with the audience. Interestingly, Sullivan relies upon Lewis throughout his discussion to explain *ethos* and epideictic rhetoric, but does not explicitly discuss Lewis as an epideictic rhetor. The first characteristic of the genuine epideictic rhetor entails their *Reputation*. At the time of the lectures, Lewis's fame and reputation are not quite to the proportions they reach once his popular works extend to the United States.

However, at this time Lewis's scholarly reputation is formidable as a figure within European academic circles. It is important to remember that Lewis delivers the lectures to an audience of academics that share his judgments. He seeks not to change their minds; rather, he simply reminds them of what they already know and agree with. Thus, his character and reputation are not questioned by the average member of the crowd. Lewis is one with his audience since he shares their opinions and embodies the tradition that he commemorates.

The next characteristic of the epideictic rhetor concerns *Vision*. In "The Functions of Epideictic," Celeste Condit describes the epideictic rhetor's vision as having a dual function. The vision interprets the present in light of cultural values while simultaneously re-presenting the cultural ideal back to the audience. In an endnote from his section on vision, Sullivan invokes *The Abolition of Man* to describe the reasonableness of universal ethical categories ("Ethos" 130, note 10). This is significant given the fact that the epideictic rhetor, traditionally understood, engages in more than mere interpretation of the culture. Rather, the epideictic rhetor fulfills the function of a prophet as epideictic oratory has its roots in religious ceremony. Within the section on vision, Sullivan again relies upon Lewis to shed light on how the prophetic activity that the epideictic rhetor performs is tied to the historical meaning of "genius." When seen in the context of epideictic oratory, Lewis suggests that the cultural representative's genius inherently connects to the truth-bearing faculty of "imagination" (*Studies* 92). *The Abolition of Man* records the moment of shared communal vision witnessed by all those in attendance for the three Riddell Memorial Lectures. But more than that, by giving

voice to the idea that objective value exists, Lewis offers a vision of the truth that belongs to all of humankind.

The third characteristic that characterizes the epideictic rhetor involves *Authority*. Sullivan draws upon Richard Weaver's assessment that epideictic content and style permits a certain type of "spaciousness" (*Ethics* 169), or broad characterization, because the cultural representative does not engage in debate. The need for the speaker to excessively validate terms diminishes the occasion that invites the epideictic rhetoric. The speaker's *ethos* weakens if he or she takes a cautious posture toward the values being put forth as common. Lewis specifically supports this when he asserts that objective value cannot stand the test of reason, because it functions as the ground of reason itself. The *ethos* of the epideictic rhetor requires insight into shared convictions which are non-negotiable, and which the audience delights to have expressed publicly. If the selection of Lewis to deliver the Riddell Memorial Lectures was, as Lucas suggests, an obvious one, then it appears conceivable that his audience expects to have their values confirmed. This means the disposition of Lewis's audience was not critically-tempered for the occasion; rather, they have a willingness to allow for broad generalizations without qualification because they trust their moral teacher to lead them in the right direction.

The *Presentation of Good Reasons* signifies the fourth characteristic of the epideictic rhetor's *ethos*. Here, Sullivan explains that the educational facet of epideictic oratory implies that the moral teacher has a profound responsibility to provide good reasons for the audience to reaffirm or assent to the values being posited. *The Abolition of Man* emphasizes Lewis's commitment to rationality itself as an important factor in moral education. One can get a sense of how to interpret the good reasons of assent in

The Abolition of Man by considering what Lewis believes about the faculty of reason. In the first letter of *The Screwtape Letters*, Wormwood receives advice from his diabolical uncle to keep the Christian patient under his management as far away as possible from rational argument. Through “the very act of arguing, you awake the patient’s reason, and once it is awake, who can foresee the result?” (2). Lewis’s *ethos* as an epideictic rhetor increases as a result of his untiring commitment to humanity’s shared faculty of reason. Thus, Lewis meets Sullivan’s fourth piece of criteria as he reinforces the value of reason by modeling it in his discourse (*Ethos* 126).

The last piece of *ethos* that successful epideictic rhetors generally exhibit comes by way of the *Creation of Consubstantiality*. Consubstantiality represents the process whereby the epideictic rhetor “establish[es] a sense of communion centered around particular values recognized by the audience” (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, *New Rhetoric* 51). Sullivan argues that the primary way in which the rhetor achieves consubstantiality with the audience comes through a type of discourse that transcends time (*Ethos* 126). While transcending time, epideictic rhetoric also functions as a shared space. As traditionally understood, epideictic rhetoric reinforces values in the present time. Lewis speaks of the present moment as a *space* “where time touches eternity” (*Screwtape* 75). Since the past has already occurred and the future has not yet been, the present moment remains the only place where reality actually exists. Lewis asserts, “nearly all vices are rooted in the future” (76). Lewis’s Christian commitments motivate him to defend the present moment, because only in the present moment can one hear and obey the “voice of conscience” (76). Lewis sees that people can only live, literally, in the present, and if one believes otherwise they will miss the place where “all duty, all grace,

all knowledge, and all pleasure dwell” (78-79). *The Abolition of Man* records the moment of truth where Lewis uses the past to shape the present in order to avoid a dismal future.

According to George Kennedy, in the epideictic ceremony “the orator is presenting the world as it ought to be rather than as it is” (*Art of Persuasion* 160). Likewise, in his article “A Closer Look at Education as Epideictic Rhetoric,” Dale Sullivan reminds us that the educational function of epideictic rhetoric serves to strengthen adherence to commonly held values with a goal toward impacting future action. As an epideictic rhetor Lewis fulfills both of these, living up to Richard Weaver’s description that “rhetoric at its truest seeks to perfect men by showing them better versions of themselves” (*Ethics* 25). As a representative of the culture, and through the *ethos* he and his audience share, Lewis instills the epideictic ceremony with a call to moral awareness—an awareness that presupposes a readiness to act, an awareness he sees being diminished and undermined through modern education’s commitment to the worldview of scientism.

1.4 RHETORIC IN LEWIS’S HISTORICAL MOMENT

Lewis delivers the Riddell Memorial Lectures and publishes them as *The Abolition of Man* amidst the influx of propaganda and mass communication technologies of World War II, an era with educational practices characterized by great suspicion of the power of language. Lewis recognizes that propaganda as “a power exercised by some men over other men” has inherent moral implications (*Abolition* 55). However, Lewis believes that the devaluation of language as an educational response to propaganda is also

ethically destructive, for it makes pupils “easier prey to the propagandist when he comes” (14). Modern educational views that devalue language create a context for new approaches to rhetoric and form much of the impetus for *The Abolition of Man*.

The potentially destructive language theories of meaning that Lewis challenges in *The Abolition of Man* derive largely from those espoused by C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards in their text, *The Meaning of Meaning*. The type of meaning Ogden and Richards explore in their text is based upon a psychology that requires “a thorough-going investigation of language” (14). As they put it, the success of this subject area depends upon a type of “Copernican revolution” if it “is to be brought into line with its fellow sciences” (13). A central tenet for Ogden and Richards is their referential theory of meaning, a theory which suggests that only words with referents in the external world, such as scientific fact-statements, can be said to express objective reality. Whereas language that signifies value, such as the “peculiar ethical use of ‘good’” is “purely emotive,” “stands for nothing whatever” and is therefore merely subjective (125). That Ogden and Richards consider scientific fact-statements as a more reliable type of discourse than statements of value appears unmistakable. Ogden and Richards believe that emotive language acts manipulatively by “evoking similar attitudes in other persons, or inciting them to actions of one kind or another” (125). Due to their conviction that “many of the most popular subjects of discussion are infested with symbolically blank but emotively active words,” Ogden and Richards propose a solution: “the extension of scientific method to these questions” and “some technique by which to ascertain which words are of this nature and on what occasions” (125).

In *The Meaning of Meaning* Ogden and Richards point toward an advancement of meaning that would remove “metaphysical explanation” from language because it protects “naïve theories” (14). Due to statements like this, Ruth Lessl Shively and Thomas Lessl argue, “The philosophical underpinnings of Ogden and Richards’ theory . . . come[s] from the linguistic positivism that was in fashion in the early part of the twentieth century” (349). According to Shively and Lessl, Ogden and Richards deliberately “identify their work with the positivist project of bringing to the social sciences the same clarity that is found in physics”; therefore, “they renounce all notions of metaphysics” and “reduce ethical statements to mere emotion” (349, note 4). Similarly, in a book he dedicates to C. S. Lewis, *Poetic Diction*, Owen Barfield recognizes the scientism in the critical writings of I. A. Richards, and also places him in the logical positivist camp. As Barfield claims, “The authors of *The Meaning of Meaning* . . . are absolutely rigid under the spell of those verbal ghosts of the physical sciences, which today make practically the whole meaning-system of so many European minds” (134).

Intellectual confidence in the methods and techniques of natural science applied to all areas of knowledge, including ethics, illustrates the worldview of scientism. Scientism grants authority to the supposed objectivity of scientific method and brings its facts and techniques into theoretical discussions of human communication. Scientism undermines the premodern rhetorical tradition by rejecting the epistemological legitimacy of traditional views of value. Ogden and Richards are representative figures of the scientism that Lewis takes to task. Lewis chooses to confront Ogden and Richards indirectly because he wants to highlight the destructiveness of their scientific language

theory as it works in practice through a textbook: *The Control of Language*, by A. King and M. Ketley, which he refers to by alias as *The Green Book*. Although Lewis directs the majority of his critique at the textbook, his overall low opinion of the work of I. A. Richards is noteworthy. In a comical story relating a revealing interaction between the two, Lewis forgets to seek out sleeping accommodations for Richards after a guest lecture. After Lewis hurries to get a bed in place, Richards makes a simple request for some reading material to help him fall asleep. Lewis rummages through his library and returns with his signed copy of *Principles of Literary Criticism*, which Richards wrote and gave to Lewis. Upon giving Richards the book, Lewis says something to the effect of “here’s something that should put you to sleep” (Russo 795). Instead it had the opposite result: “Richards could not sleep because the margins were full of Lewis’s biting comments” (795).

Lewis contends with the critical thought and language theories of Richards throughout his career because of their overt dismissal of the traditionally held view of objective value. Because of this, Brian Barbour suggests that throughout his life, “Lewis’s antagonism” toward Richards “was absolute and unremitting” (“Lewis and Cambridge” 443). By defending objective value Lewis implicitly defends the ethical attentiveness that permeates the premodern rhetorical tradition through moral education. Like Lewis, Father Walter Ong understands that, “Until the modern technological age . . . Western culture in its intellectual and academic manifestations can be meaningfully described as rhetorical culture” (*Rhetoric* 1). Premodern rhetorical culture consists of an educational milieu whereby a dogmatic belief in objective value is imperative to its foundational goal, that of character-formation. Thus, by rejecting objective value

Richards breaks from the premodern rhetorical tradition, whereas Lewis, by defending objective value, aligns with it. Although Richards writes explicit rhetorical theory in *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, George Kennedy regards his thought as “the least classicizing” and among “the least satisfying” of all the contemporary approaches to rhetoric (*Classical Rhetoric* 2nd ed. 294). Similarly, Kenneth Burke, a contemporary of Richards and Lewis, writes of the inherent problems with the rhetorical thought of Richards. In his *Permanence and Change*, Burke asserts that since rhetoric has action and universe-building as its province, it therefore follows that “all universe-building is ethical universe-building” (256). By arguing that “The ethical is thus linked with the communicative,” Burke deliberately obliterates the faulty distinctions of Richards, who “implies that there is some other kind of [rhetorical] universe-building which is not ethical” (250).

This extended appraisal of the amoral scientism that Richards advances throughout his rather positivistic writings on language provides a context for understanding the status of rhetoric in Lewis’s historical moment. In an article written in 1948 Richards states, “I would like to defend my early writings from the charge of scientism”; however, he admits that “they have been read as supporting scientism” (“Emotive” 151, note 11). In *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis understands that the result of such ideas matters more than intent. Thus, for Richards and *The Green Book* authors alike, Lewis believes that their intentions are irrelevant to how their ideas will be received: “I am not concerned with what [the authors] desired but with the effect their book will certainly have on the schoolboy’s mind” (5). Among the many harmful effects that scientism has on language and education, this project concentrates on how it

functions to make rhetoric obsolete. To summarize, Lewis challenges the language theory of Ogden and Richards because it divides meaning into two camps, symbolic (or scientific) and emotive (*The Meaning of Meaning* 122-126). For Ogden and Richards, the meaning inferred through the scientific language of facts is objective because it refers to something that exists in physical nature, whereas emotive language of value is subjective because it refers to something immaterial.

In this schema the characteristic practices of the premodern rhetorical tradition concerning moral education become obsolete. Since language that describes values does not have a physical referent, the principles of positivism render all virtue, moral judgments, and ethical statements as mere opinion. Several historical factors contribute to making Lewis's moment an exceptionally low point for the status of rhetoric. The ascendancy of scientism brought forth through logical positivism is the result of a long process whereby method replaces rhetoric in matters of reason and discourse.

1.5 SCHOLARSHIP ON LEWIS'S RHETORIC

In a scholarly review written a decade ago, "The Legacy of C. S. Lewis and the Prospect of Religious Rhetoric," Thomas Lessl offers some extensive starting points for studying the work of Lewis from the perspective of rhetorical studies. After spending considerable time demonstrating the characteristics of Lewis's religious communication, Lessl concludes his review with the following observation: "In spite of the vastness of the Lewis scholarship now in print . . . the rhetorical aspect of [Lewis] has yet to be explored in depth" (136). Unfortunately, in the years that have followed Lessl's observation, scholarly work on the rhetorical aspect of Lewis's corpus remains sparse. Of those

scholarly works that recognize the appropriateness of Lewis for rhetorical studies, they tend to emphasize his rhetorical content and style while avoiding comprehensive treatment of his relationship to the premodern rhetorical tradition. Works of this sort fit into the first of two types of scholarship on Lewis, serving as helpful yet incomplete supplements to this project. The second type are works on Lewis that, in most cases, ignore the premodern rhetorical tradition altogether but still interpret some of his principles in ways that correspond to this project. These works help to verify and support this project's interpretation of Lewis's rhetoric and philosophy of education.

Scholarly literature of the first type recognizes Lewis's rhetorical sensibilities and principles, but overlooks the extent to which *The Abolition of Man*, as a rhetoric and philosophy of education, both tacitly aligns and defends the premodern rhetorical tradition. This project hopes to expand scholarly discussions of the first type by shifting the focus deliberately onto his rhetoric and philosophy of education. In response to Lessl's observation, this project argues that Lewis's educational perspective provides us with one of the finest ways to discover the "rhetorical aspect" of his thought. Present within works that identify Lewis's rhetorical principles are the seeds of such an inquiry already; however, this project attempts to make this connection explicit. Of overriding importance in these rhetorically attentive works are those which, in various unplanned ways, encourage this project's interpretation of Lewis's thought—that he embraces the premodern rhetorical tradition's unity of rhetoric and philosophy and thereby reveals his Augustinian origins.

In his article "Rhetorica Religii," James Como mentions that the thought of Lewis displays an integration of rhetorical and philosophical sensibilities, and, in the same

article, implies that his rhetorical posture resonates with Augustine. Similarly, in “C. S. Lewis, ‘Congenital Rhetorician,’” Greg Anderson suggests that, in principle, Lewis’s understanding of rhetoric rejects “the modern temptation to reduce rhetoric to the canon of style” (201), and remarks, “Lewis is part of a long tradition of Christian rhetoricians [where] Augustine holds a high place” (211). Lastly, Jerry Root, in *C. S. Lewis and a Problem of Evil*, recognizes that “Lewis’s rhetorical approach places him in an old and venerated tradition,” a tradition where “dialectic . . . supplies rhetoric with its power to persuade” (xv). Each of these scholarly works makes reference to Lewis’s tacit affinity for the premodern rhetorical tradition in general and for Augustine in particular. Collectively this string of nascent insights harmonizes with this project while displaying a necessity and rationale by which to develop them further. These sources insinuate that Lewis fits within the premodern rhetorical tradition, and in response this project argues that the best way to justify placing Lewis here comes through his rhetoric and philosophy of education.

The second type of scholarly works on Lewis that are pertinent to this project recognizes many of the same key touch points, but the differences become apparent in how these principles are applied. While these sources interpret Lewis’s principles in ways that resonate with this project, they take little to no notice of the premodern rhetorical tradition. In reviewing this select list of sources, one group focuses primarily upon broad thematic elements across Lewis’s corpus, whereas the other group concentrates on *The Abolition of Man* specifically.

The first of these broad thematic sources is *C. S. Lewis: A Philosophy of Education*, a text that uses a select list of Lewis’s works to develop a philosophy of

education. The authors, Loomis and Rodriguez, state that their book is among the first “to unlock the deepest levels of Lewis’s argument” in *The Abolition of Man* (5). However, the authors do not focus on this text alone, as they extrapolate “philosophical and economic issues” (7) from several of Lewis’s works to construct what amounts to their own philosophy of education. Although Loomis and Rodriguez recognize and make use of several of Lewis’s educational principles in much the same way as this project, particularly its critique of scientism, the goal and interpretive practice of their book remain different. The authors use Lewis to construct “a new, integrated theory of social institutions that explains a variety of social phenomena, including how education is theorized and practiced within the imposing background conditions of naturalism and scientism” (1), and examine issues raised by *The Abolition of Man* “through the lens of philosophical economics” (8). This project differs in its goals as well as its interpretive practice. Rather than using the text to construct a new theory, this project reads *The Abolition of Man* as implicitly supporting the deep-rooted ideals of the premodern rhetorical tradition as the ablest response to the amoral scientism of modern education. As a result, this project interprets Lewis’s ideas of education from this perspective.

Although most of the secondary literature on Lewis interprets him exclusively through the philosophical tradition, some works are more conducive to this project’s rhetorical interpretation than others. Of the thematic group, one such work, Doris Myers’s *C. S. Lewis in Context*, seeks to establish “the public context of language” (xi) in Lewis’s historical moment by placing “his works in the context of early twentieth-century language controversies” (xii). In this book Myers attests to Lewis’s substantial veneration of language, and in a few places discusses him in relation to the discipline of

rhetoric. Myers recognizes that Lewis was “steeped in classical rhetoric and philosophy” (17), and even argues that one of his Narnia chronicles, *The Horse and His Boy*, offers evidence that he “makes use of the traditional assumption that rhetoric is a moral discipline” (161). Myers also aligns Lewis with Augustine, albeit briefly, by describing both of them as representative Christian humanists. Like this project, Myers understands that both Lewis and Augustine believe “that Christ the Word is Lord of all human culture, and that all human learning is valuable because it contains hints and foreshadowings of the Incarnation” (113). This project builds on Myer’s brief but important insights by calling attention to the fact that this purported Christian humanism depends upon the principles of the premodern rhetorical tradition for its existence.

The last of the thematic sources on Lewis that identify ideas supportive of this project comes through Gilbert Meilaender’s *The Taste for the Other: The Social and Ethical Thought of C. S. Lewis*. Meilaender not only displays Lewis’s explicit Augustinian roots in detail, but he also recognizes the magnitude of Lewis’s concern for the state of moral education in his historical moment. According to Meilaender, Lewis’s “stress on moral education could be said to be the strongest and most permanent theme of [his] ethic” (199). Meilaender simply takes it for granted that Lewis’s moral educational views are directly influenced by the thought of Augustine, the thought which also served to “shaped so much in medieval Christendom” (235). Although Meilaender’s interpretation of Lewis’s intellectual influences and educational ideas are, for the most part, in agreement with this project, he makes no explicit reference to the role of the premodern rhetorical tradition in establishing the context of such beliefs. This project argues that, taken together, Lewis’s Augustinian roots and concern with moral education

not only form the basic foundation of his rhetoric and philosophy of education but also simultaneously align him with the premodern rhetorical tradition.

The final group of relevant secondary sources is those focused specifically on *The Abolition of Man*. Again, these readings tend to highlight principles that are harmonious with this project's interpretation of Lewis's rhetoric and philosophy of education, but they do not adequately acknowledge that the source of these principles are found within the premodern rhetorical tradition. The first of these, Peter Kreeft's *C. S. Lewis for the Third Millennium*, receives inclusion due to the precision with which it draws attention to the spiritual implications and undertones of *The Abolition of Man*, all of which still confront us with an urgency to act. In much the same way, Jean Bethke Elshtain's "*The Abolition of Man: C. S. Lewis's Prescience Concerning Things to Come*" emphasizes the contemporary relevance of the text. Both Kreeft and Elshtain defend Lewis's notion of reason as it stands in opposition to the positivism of his age. Although they do not acknowledge it as such, his notion of reason stems from the practical reason that the premodern rhetorical tradition preserves.

Finally, of all the secondary literature on Lewis in general and *The Abolition of Man* in particular, Michael Aeschliman's *The Restitution of Man* corresponds most closely to this project. Like this project, Aeschliman realizes that, in opposition to scientism, "what Lewis trusted was the fund of 'common sense' of men throughout history, the *communis sensus* . . . the vast common sense of humanity, of which he felt he was a trustee and which he articulated and defended in all his writing, speaking and living" (3). Based upon the way the concept appears in *The Restitution of Man*, Aeschliman relies upon the philosophical strand of the common sense tradition to the

virtual exclusion of its coequal rhetorical origination. According to Aeschliman, “Lewis seeks to revitalize “an age-old philosophical tradition” (58): “It is the great central philosophical/metaphysical tradition of the West in which Lewis enlisted his own mind and pen” (3). Aeschliman recognizes that, with Augustine, the Christian humanist tradition “served as touchstones” for Lewis’s “great short philosophical work *The Abolition of Man*” (26). However, Aeschliman does not specifically identify the importance of the premodern rhetorical tradition in shaping Christian humanism or the common sense tradition. This project understands Lewis’s placement within the common sense tradition in a manner deliberately more nuanced and inclusive of the premodern rhetorical tradition. This does not suggest that Aeschliman provides an inaccurate account of Lewis, just an incomplete one.

1.6 LEWIS’S RHETORICAL PRINCIPLES

While previous attempts have been made to integrate Lewis into contemporary discussions of rhetoric, the degree to which his core principles defend the premodern rhetorical tradition remains one of the main things consistently absent from these accounts. Lewis’s educational agenda aligns with the premodern rhetorical tradition by promoting the societal role of *sensus communis*. In *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis’s description of the *Tao*, or natural law, functions like *sensus communis*, a rhetorical first principle that serves as a foundation for communal sense-making. Much like Lewis’s *Tao*, the premodern rhetorical tradition understands *sensus communis* as the ground of practical reason (*phronēsis*). The concept of *sensus communis* corresponds with the *Tao* in first recognizing the reality of objective value, and second, recognizing the necessity of

this belief for ethical decision making in society at-large. Through the *Tao* Lewis implicitly advances the value of *sensus communis*, a concept that necessitates a certain type of mind that an education in the premodern rhetorical tradition produces. By recognizing the resonance of the *Tao* with *sensus communis*, one sees that Lewis defends the common rationality of human beings in principle and expounds upon it in practice. Lewis's belief in objective value permits him to accept as true the operational consistency of the human mind and heart across time and space. Lewis demonstrates a charitable and dignified understanding of the human condition through writings and public addresses that support the idea of *imago Dei*. For Lewis, *imago Dei* means that humanity has common rational abilities in addition to the freedom of will, because humans are beings made in the image of God.

In defending and operating from the principle of *imago Dei* in education, Lewis joins the distinctly Christian rhetorical tradition that was shaped through Augustine. St. Augustine (AD 354-430) lived during a crucial time in history, a crossroads between late antiquity and the early middle ages. Augustine's historical moment represents a time where rhetoric still functions as a way of life but was becoming discredited as an academic discipline because of its increasing affiliation with the Second Sophistic. Due to its pagan heritage many of the early Church fathers were asking questions about the validity of rhetoric for Christian education. However, Augustine defends the role of rhetoric in Christian learning because he recognizes that "every good and true Christian should understand that wherever he may find truth, it is his Lord's" (*On Christian Doctrine* II.xviii.28). Given that all truth is God's truth, Augustine recognizes the value of rhetoric both in education and in practice. Appropriately, Gilbert Meilaender states

that throughout Lewis's corpus a consistent social and ethical theme emerges that "perceive[s] the whole of human life in relation to God, the Creator and Redeemer, and his view are best described as, quite simply, Augustinian" (235). For the purpose of this project, it must be emphasized that Augustine was rhetorically trained and educated, taught rhetoric, and was responsible for bringing rhetorical thought under a Christian umbrella.

The most important Augustinian idea that manifests itself throughout Lewis's corpus, that all truth is God's truth, has significant rhetorical implications. By taking a stance that truth may be found across traditions, Lewis simultaneously broadens his audience and his appeal. Following this idea allows Lewis to claim that as "a Christian you do not have to believe that all other religions are simply wrong all through" (*Mere Christianity* 35). Like Augustine before him, Lewis uses this principle not to minimize difference but to emphasize a common ground for moral discourse. As seen along these lines, Lewis's conceptualization of myth appears to extend from his Augustinian roots. Several Lewis biographers and Lewis himself attribute a September 1931 meeting with J. R. R. Tolkien and Hugo Dyson as a crucial moment that contributes to his conversion to Christianity. Walter Hooper's edited collection of Lewis's letters to Arthur Greeves, *They Stand Together*, includes correspondence that describes the course of his discussion with Tolkien and Dyson. In it, Lewis expresses how he came to look at the story of Christ as a *true myth*. In this contemporary moment one is apt to think of *myth* as non-historical and untrue, and before his conversion this was Lewis's opinion of all religious narratives. However, in "Myth Became Fact" Lewis explains how he eventually came to see that "what flows into you from the myth is not truth but reality (truth is always *about*

something, but reality is that *about which truth is*)” (66). In other words, myths provide a reality, or ground, upon which particular truths are discernible. Truths cannot be interpreted apart from the myths that give them their very existence. For Lewis, “Christianity is a myth which is also a fact. The old myth of the Dying God, *without ceasing to be myth*, comes down from the heaven of legend and imagination to the earth of history” (66). Upon reflection of books read during his earlier education, Lewis remarks how it was taken for granted that “religious ideas were sheer illusion” and nobody “attempted to show in what sense Christianity fulfilled Paganism or Paganism prefigured Christianity” (*Surprised* 62).

Lewis understands that while many historical myths and religious narratives may be scientifically unverifiable, they are nevertheless true for the communities that believe them. Myths express the societal values that are embedded in the fabric of lived experience. Myths provide their adherents with meaning and a vision of the world that has presuppositions that guide lives; when thought of in this way Lewis sees that science itself has mythic qualities. Lewis understands the rhetorical dimension of myth and narrative in that they advance certain beliefs and actions while simultaneously opposing others. For the premodern rhetorical tradition myths are the backdrop for sense-making. Thus, understanding the myths of a given society, whether conscious or unconscious, exemplifies a crucial element of rhetorical education and practice. It remains important, however, to stress that Lewis opposes the notion that all myths and narratives are just as good as the next. As a Christian intellectual Lewis believes that his particular faith perspective stands as the culmination of all truth claims. At the same time, Lewis displays a profound humility before the idea of tradition, and acknowledges the validity

of particular truths within different religious and philosophical frameworks, making *The Abolition of Man* more remarkable, not less.

By defending traditional cultural myths *The Abolition of Man* further aligns with the premodern rhetorical tradition with its stress upon imagination. In *A Preface to Paradise Lost*, Lewis claims that “in Rhetoric imagination is present for the sake of passion (and, therefore, in the long run, for the sake of action)” (51). Thus, Lewis understands that through a shared faculty of imagination the rhetor relies upon cultural myths to affect and inspire the community (of which the rhetor belongs) toward particular actions that are grounded in united recollection. In an essay titled “Bluspels and Flalansferes,” Lewis claims that “imagination is the organ of meaning” (265) and elsewhere that he intends to “re-affirm the romantic doctrine of imagination as a truth-bearing faculty, though not quite as the romantics understood it” (Green and Hooper 126). Here Lewis’s rhetorical principle of imagination resonates with the work of Giambattista Vico (1668-1744), a rhetorical scholar who considers imagination a creative rhetorical faculty whereby people perceive truths particular to cultures as well as common truths based upon natural law.

Lewis sees that modern educational practices cater to a type of reasoning that ignores the practical reason of *sensus communis*. *The Abolition of Man* upholds the role of practical reasoning as essential for human fulfillment and argues that, by default, the atrophy of practical reason leads to human diminishment. Lewis rejects the notion that all areas of human experience, such as reason, value, and virtue, can be improved through scientific inquiry. Instead, these categories have a certain timeless character that is inseparable from what it means to be human. For Lewis, our understanding of reason,

value, and virtue depend upon, and must be received through, human tradition—not science.

1.7 CONCLUSION

Walter Hooper considers *The Abolition of Man* “an all but indispensable introduction to the entire *corpus* of Lewisiana” (Lewis, “On Ethics” 47, note 1). *The Abolition of Man* not only justifies the intellectual validity of traditional faith commitments but also serves as the most representative of Lewis’s works in displaying his participation in the premodern rhetorical tradition. *The Abolition of Man* functions as a rhetoric and philosophy of education by relying upon traditional rhetorical principles to incite action responsive to contemporary problems. The importance of a certain type of education, moral education, for the well-being of both individuals and communities, epitomizes one of Lewis’s most consistent themes throughout his corpus. Lewis’s rhetorical project could be rightly classified as one that urges the good reasons of moral education as essential for maintaining human freedom, and as a defense against a modern culture that prefers to recognize the sweeping truth claims of scientism. In contrast to modern education, Lewis’s rhetoric and philosophy of education supports learning that teaches pupils how to make reasonable and ethical sense out of contingent situations. Throughout his lifetime as an academic and public Christian intellectual Lewis embodies and advances a rhetoric and philosophy of education that makes moral influence over another’s actions and beliefs the primary purpose of education.

The arguments of *The Abolition of Man* belong within the premodern rhetorical tradition. Although Lewis was rhetorically educated and steeped in this tradition, he

takes these sensibilities for granted. In our age it is helpful to identify and draw these sensibilities out—to give name to them. Lewis advocates for educational approaches grounded in the premodern rhetorical tradition as a response to scientism. Lewis defends the operative function of this tradition, its focus upon action. The premodern rhetorical tradition offers a distinct framework that is sorely needed in response to the harmful practices of modern education. The premodern rhetorical tradition embodies a contrary conceptualization of life and education.

In *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis implicitly defends the ideals and worldview that have been transmitted through the premodern rhetorical tradition, making it a rhetoric and philosophy of education. Walter Ong reminds us in *Rhetoric, Romance and Technology* that the premodern rhetorical tradition allows for significant contemporary discussions of human identity as contrasted with the modern technological era. For the entire premodern rhetorical tradition assists us in “understanding much that went on in the past and much that is going on in our own times, as well as much that may come about in the future” (ix). Ong plainly recognizes that Lewis’s *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama* abides as a text worth wrestling with. Ong uses the following passage from Lewis’s text to launch a conversation with regard to the premodern rhetorical tradition: “in rhetoric, more than anything else, the continuity of the old European tradition was embodied” (61). Ong uses Lewis to draw attention to the distinct character of the premodern rhetorical tradition. Like Lewis, Ong understands that the premodern rhetorical tradition encapsulates an entirely different way of knowing and relating to nature and society as compared to the mind produced through modern education.

Lewis joins a long line of like-minded intellectuals operating within a rhetorical framework who voice concern over the perceived role of education at crucial moments in history. Interpreting Lewis's idea of education through the lens offered by the premodern rhetorical tradition places many of his arguments in contemporary context. By looking to the premodern rhetorical tradition one sees that many of Lewis's educational concerns are not new, but have a history all their own. Although scientism does present some unprecedented challenges to education, the ideals of the premodern rhetorical tradition are still able to help us make decisions in response to a world dominated by fragmented learning. As part of a liberal arts curriculum, rhetorical education centers on the foundational precept that knowledge should relate to things in a unified whole. The character of the premodern rhetorical tradition, as understood by its progenitors, has always been free inquiry and public disclosure. In contrast, modern education specializes and fragments knowledge to such an extent that each discipline increasingly requires its own technical experts to interpret its respective subject matter. By looking at Lewis as part of the premodern rhetorical tradition from Isocrates, Cicero, Quintilian, Augustine, to Vico, one is better able to interpret the significance and practical character of his educational agenda. Rhetorical education serves a practical function in society by instilling value and supporting the development of the practical reasoning capacities that are necessary to thrive in a contingent world and to develop as a human being.

Lewis understands that in order to consider ourselves human creatures we are dependent upon tradition for our definition of what being a human creature means. That definition requires reference to the doctrine of objective value that exists in the *Tao*. The premodern rhetorical tradition serves as the locus for common values and by extent

functions as moral education. By acknowledging Lewis as part of the premodern rhetorical tradition one gains a unique understanding with regard to how one should respond to the amoral educational practices brought forth through the scientism that governs our historical moment.

CHAPTER TWO

EDUCATION AND THE PREMODERN RHETORICAL TRADITION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis implicitly promotes standards of education that have historically been housed within the premodern rhetorical tradition. Corresponding to this tradition, Lewis's rhetoric and philosophy of education defends the necessity of moral education for cultivating the ethical aspects of common sense (*sensus communis*) that are necessary for developing the virtue of practical reason (*phronēsis*). Moral education subsists at the forefront of the premodern rhetorical tradition, and from antiquity through much of the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, the idea of moral education remains virtually synonymous with rhetoric. Premodern rhetorical education stresses training in practical reason as preparation for the consensus building and ethical participation required for civic engagement. By default, the premodern rhetorical tradition provides a history of education along with a general account of how Western cultural values are taught, both explicitly and implicitly, to the members of society. George Kennedy states, "Not only in Greece and Rome, but in medieval and renaissance Europe, rhetoric was studied at such an early age that, like language itself, it tended to become an instinctive part of students' mental framework" (*Classical Rhetoric* 111). For the majority of the educational tradition in the West rhetorical education remains a prerequisite for entering the public sphere; once properly trained one is able to understand and argue from within the *sensus communis* of one's particular culture.

In order to display Lewis's alignment within the premodern rhetorical tradition it seems necessary to first frame how this tradition's distinctive educational ideals permit such an interpretation. After framing the distinct premodern rhetorical ideals, which Lewis tacitly supports in *The Abolition of Man*, the vast majority of this chapter traces the ways in which these ideals manage to survive despite antagonistic attempts to discredit them from antiquity to modern times. The distinctive nature of the premodern rhetorical tradition's educational ideals becomes clearer when set against the countervailing ideals with which they are confronted throughout history.

2.2 FRAMING RHETORICAL IDEALS

In *Orators & Philosophers*, Bruce Kimball presents a history of liberal education that argues that, at its core, liberal education is essentially an ongoing conflict between orators and philosophers. Historically, each of these traditions represents distinct assumptions about human nature and human abilities that, in turn, influence their educational ideals. The premodern rhetorical tradition, of which *The Abolition of Man* tacitly promotes, operates under the assumption that through public deliberation human beings play a crucial role in determining both the relevance and practical application of knowledge. The philosophical tradition, on the other hand, values theoretical speculation and tends to view knowledge acquisition as primarily a private affair. The premodern rhetorical tradition esteems the objective value of virtue, and believes "the task of liberal education is to inform the student about the virtues [already known] rather than, as the Socratic tradition held, to teach the student how to search them" (Kimball, *Orators* 38). On this account one might suppose that its cultural conservatism in regard to virtue

makes the premodern rhetorical tradition intractable; however, Kennedy argues on the contrary: “rhetoric was at times a greater liberalizing force in ancient intellectual life than was philosophy, which tended to become dogmatic” (*New History* 9). The premodern rhetorical tradition recognizes “The basic principle of humane law—that anyone, however clear the evidence on the other side seems to be, has a right to present a case in the best light possible,” and, as a result, “opposing views [are entertained] when expressed with rhetorical effectiveness” (9-10).

The premodern rhetorical tradition maintains an educational system that backs the cultural values and virtues necessary for democracy. These values and virtues form an objective societal common sense (*sensus communis*) that serves as a prerequisite for practical reason (*phronēsis*). Practical reasoning occurs when opinions that are open for discussion create contingent situations and present incompatible options that nevertheless require action. Beginning in ancient Greece, oral societies consider practical reasoning an intellectual virtue essential to the personal growth of a human being. Practical reasoning flourishes whenever the educational ideals of the West favor the rhetorical tradition, but declines when speculative philosophy becomes ascendant. A speculative educational program places the burden of proof upon tradition, supports private reason, and implies that received values are insufficient. *The Abolition of Man* aligns with the premodern rhetorical tradition’s educational ideals by supporting the need for societal *sensus communis* in developing the virtue of practical reasoning.

In all of this Lewis follows in the premodern rhetorical tradition that accepts the idea that some things must be received by faith in order to understand their relevance. In his *Confessions* St. Augustine declares, “I considered how countless were the things that I

believed, although I had not seen them nor was I present when they took place . . . Unless we believed these things, nothing at all could be done in this life” (VI.v.7). In true Augustinian fashion Lewis understands that belief precedes understanding. Lewis argues that a shared belief in objective value is necessary for ethical action, and like representatives of the premodern rhetorical tradition, he teaches that traditional virtue must be accepted as good for its own sake. For even if Lewis could prove that the intellectual virtue of practical reasoning was necessary for human freedom, he understands that there would still be no universal argument that proves people should be free. In *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis abandons any attempt to prove that values are objective or that people should want to be free. Instead he simply looks at the overwhelming record of premodern societies that accepted both without question, and considers whether or not we are better off than they.

Lewis sees that even asking if something is humane and democratic requires some type of shared understanding of what these terms mean. In premodern rhetorical culture this shared fund of meaning occurs within *sensus communis*, and the more this realm diminishes human beings are less able to coalesce in ways that preserve freedom. Like representatives of the premodern rhetorical tradition before him, Lewis understands that without shared values ordinary human beings are less capable of communicating in meaningful ways. The less human beings communicate with one another in a public capacity, the more practical reasoning begins to deteriorate. When this occurs we become susceptible to the rule of those who do not necessarily have our best interests in mind. As Lewis states, “I am very doubtful whether history shows us one example of a man who, having stepped outside traditional morality and attained power, has used that

power benevolently” (66). Once the objective value of *sensus communis* becomes unnecessary, practical reason atrophies, and people are at the mercy of those in power. Lewis asks, on what basis do we suppose that people in power will act altruistically when they are without any type of objective accountability? In essence, *The Abolition of Man* and the ideals of the premodern rhetorical tradition are calls to ethical action. These calls to ethical action are founded upon the presupposition that human freedom is something worth preserving, a probabilistic argument which only makes sense to those who recognize the constraints of the *Tao*.

Lewis critiques the modern educational programs that make endless speculation the goal because they undermine the business of practical living. For ordinary people of premodern societies, practical living uses and recognizes the vitality of wisdom already possessed. As the predecessor of modern education, speculative philosophy begins a process that places method (dialectic) above human beings in matters of accessing knowledge. It implies that pursuing truth is more important than the practical application of truth already known. However, rhetorical education keeps this system in check as long as it remains ascendant. *The Abolition of Man* strongly suggests that the practical application of values in the human life-world requires rhetorical deliberation. Rhetorical education supports objective value and provides its pupils with the prerequisites that are necessary for determining how to make sense of newly discovered scientific facts. The realm of shared values and virtues cannot prove its worth theoretically; it must be accepted through faith.

Lewis aligns with the premodern rhetorical tradition by suggesting that objective value exists but still requires communal buy-in for it to matter. Lewis realizes that, in

theory, objective value exists apart from one's recognition of it, but without communal buy-in, Lewis wonders what practical difference it would make. Both the premodern rhetorical tradition and Lewis believe that truth must be communicated for it to matter, and without a space where people can communicate, truth will not matter. For Lewis, objective value exists as an important part of human freedom and survival. Lewis believes that the motivation for turning knowledge into action occurs in a framework of shared principles. Practically speaking, for Lewis, there is strength in numbers. Without a shared public sphere, which tests ideas, Lewis questions our ability to avoid harmful policies. *The Abolition of Man*, and the whole basis of the premodern rhetorical tradition, implies that human freedom requires shared values that are objectively held by the community. These values form a basis of human agreement, values which, by default, include the necessity of preservation. Through common sense (*sensus communis*), shared values create the necessary context that allows human beings to join together and make decisions. Without this context, human beings are at the disposal of those in power and forfeit the ability to test public policy. People who share values have the same content and motivation needed to act in unison. For Lewis and the premodern rhetorical tradition, things are very simple: we need each other and shared values in order to stave off tyranny.

2.3 RHETORIC IN ANCIENT GREECE

From the beginning of recorded history in the West, educational practices uphold the inherent interconnectedness of virtue and rhetoric. Long before the age of Socrates and Plato, education in Hellenic oral society rests upon moving adherents to *aretē*,

defined as moral excellence or virtue (Kimball, *Orators* 16). Over time the importance of *aretē* in education shifts and virtue, once it reaches the hands of the sophists, loses its emphasis upon moral excellence and becomes the means and amoral pursuit of merely winning an argument. The practices of the sophists are a common enemy for Isocrates and Plato alike. In particular, Isocrates recognizes how the popular sophistic techniques break down the traditional integrity of rhetoric and ethics (17). Although Kimball places Aristotle squarely within the philosophical tradition, his *Rhetoric* supports the relationship of rhetoric and virtue as seen through his discussion of the rhetorical proof *ethos*. Aristotle establishes elsewhere that one acquires the virtues not through contemplation alone, but by putting them into action:

For the things which we have to learn before we can do them we learn by doing: men become builders by building houses, and harpists by playing the harp. Similarly, we become just by the practice of just actions, self-controlled by exercising self-control, and courageous by performing acts of courage.

(*Nicomachean Ethics*, II, 1)

Thus, for Aristotle, moral excellence, or virtue, is a matter of action, and moving people to moral action would remain the recognizable province of the premodern rhetorical tradition.

From the earliest of times Western society abides by the principle that nothing is more practical than using education to instill societal values in youth. Henri Marrou begins his text, *A History of Education*, with the assertion, “From [Homer] the Greek cultural tradition rises in an unbroken line and he supplies us with the oldest documentary evidence of any value about the education of antiquity” (3). Prior to the age of Socrates,

Greek aristocracy uses oral recitation of the Homeric epics for the important cultural function of moral education, but later there emerges three distinct educational approaches in response to the rise of democracy in Ancient Greece. The first, from the sophists, makes education primarily technique-driven, whereas the second approach, from Plato, makes it primarily content-driven. Each of these approaches breaks from moral education in the Homeric oral tradition, and, in divergent ways, undermines the function of rhetoric. From Isocrates comes a third approach, one that defends the rhetorical aspects of moral education against both extremes that would exclude the other. For Isocrates, learning how to articulate philosophy well so that it makes a practical difference in people's lives remains at the forefront of his educational ideal. For a time, the educational model of Isocrates prevails in the West, and, as a result, lays the foundation for what becomes the premodern rhetorical tradition.

Isocrates begins the premodern rhetorical tradition with certain presuppositions about education. In particular, Isocrates understands that education must promote, not undermine, virtue, particularly the intellectual virtue of practical reason; for society uses practical reason to publicly test the ideas that practically impact our lives. In Ancient Greece, the oratorical practice of rhetoric functions as the organizational framework of civic government and the crucial means of enacting practical agendas. Marrou reminds us that the Greeks first invented the idea of a school in order to serve as a social institution that would fulfill the important cultural function of training future leaders in the language arts appropriate for public oratory in the polis (*History* 68). Around the fifth and fourth centuries BC, however, the Greek populace sees a revolution in writing and the burgeoning literacy challenges the primacy of orality. Around this time Aristotle

begins to theorize about rhetoric as a practical art, thus legitimizing it as a distinct discipline. As a result, rhetoric becomes conceptualized as a specific area of knowledge to be studied alongside philosophy. As it becomes an art “rhetoric is made,” which allows people to think about it and theorize about it while practicing it.

In his *Phaedrus* Plato perceives, perhaps favorably, that literacy will transform his Greek culture; as Eric Havelock suggests, “the oral state of mind is still for Plato the main enemy” (41). Explaining the impact of literacy on Greek culture continues to attract diverse scholarship, but as Walter Ong makes us aware, overall the theory and practice of rhetoric increases as a result of literacy: “writing from the beginning did not reduce orality but enhanced it, making it possible to organize the ‘principles’ or constituents of oratory into a scientific ‘art’” (*Orality* 9). George Kennedy notes that during this transitional time three distinct strands of reflection upon rhetoric emerge. First, *technical rhetoric* thrives in rule-based rhetorical theory; it concentrates on the speech’s content above the speaker and audience and avoids excessive concern with ethical issues. Second, *sophistic rhetoric* thrives in a system devoid of universals, focuses on the style of the speaker over substance, and tends to ignore ethical issues. Third, *philosophical rhetoric* takes the best from both the technical rule-based system as well as the sophistic emphasis on style, centers on the effect of the speaker and speech on the audience, and realigns itself with the ethical content that philosophy provides (*Classical Rhetoric* 2nd ed. 14-15).

By highlighting the importance of the intellectual virtue practical reason (*phronēsis*), Isocrates stands at the beginning of the premodern rhetorical tradition as the first proponent of philosophical rhetoric. The majority of contemporary rhetorical

scholarship on practical reason tends to think of *phronēsis* primarily according to an Aristotelian framework. However, according to Takis Poulakos, “Isocrates’ notion of *phronēsis* anticipates Aristotle” (“Isocrates” 73). Poulakos argues,

For Isocrates, *phronēsis* was a way of exercising one’s *doxa* [opinion], the process of directing one’s conjectures about the future through the past. A storehouse of values, traditions, and beliefs of the community, the past also includes the wise examples of earlier statesmen who directed their own conjectures toward the benefit of the city. (73)

Although there is much agreement between the two, the Isocratean account of *phronēsis* slightly differs from Aristotle. Above all Isocrates looks to past practices of the wise as exemplars of *how* to engage in *phronēsis* in order to make future creative decisions, whereas Aristotle looks at *what* the past decisions of the wise were and uses the content as a precedent to assist decision making. To put it another way, Isocrates respects past decisions but “uses the notion of *phronēsis* to convey the spirit of their judgments, not the specific cases of their decision making” (74). In this sense Isocrates rejects a prescriptive account of practical reason alone, and opens it up as a creative practice that transcends rules and methods.

The educational model of Isocrates recognizes and secures the unity of theory and action (*praxis*), content and form, and philosophy and rhetoric. Contrary to the sophistic emphasis upon the primacy of style, Isocrates advocates for a type of rhetoric where moral content is embedded in style. Marrou explains the two battles that Isocrates fights simultaneously, one with the Platonic philosophers and the other with the sophistic orators (*History* 85). Both are positions of excess in opposite directions; Plato wants to

make rhetoric nothing while the sophistic orators seek to make rhetorical style everything. Isocrates takes the middle road and preserves the marriage of rhetoric and philosophy in educational theory and practice, for in his educational program “form and content are inseparable” (88). Moreover, Isocrates operates from the characteristic paradigm of the premodern rhetorical tradition, which holds the character of the rhetor as an indistinguishable part of content and style, thus highlighting the ethical component of rhetoric. Isocrates knows that orators cannot wholly control how the persuasive elements of their character and public life will play into how the audience judges their discourse.

While Plato and Isocrates have a common enemy in the sophists, Kimball draws attention to the fact that the modern mind tends to place the burden of proof on Isocrates rather than Plato when it comes to denying allegiance to the sophists (*Orators* 34). In other words, why should it be assumed outright that Plato was not guilty of sophistry himself? In *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, James J. Murphy contends,

The sin of the sophist is that he denies the necessity of subject matter and believes that *forma* alone is desirable. An opposite vice, one to which historians of rhetoric have never given a name, depends upon the belief that the man possessed of truth will *ipso facto* be able to communicate the truth to others. (60)

Murphy labels the latter vice the “Platonic rhetorical heresy” and considers it just as egregious as sophistry on the other end of the spectrum. The idea of philosophical sophistry introduces a concern very much at the forefront of the premodern rhetorical tradition. The only way to know whether or not the philosopher resembles a sophist in practice comes through his ability to express the philosophy in such a way that allows it

to have a meaningful effect on those it touches. The necessity of expressing philosophy in ways ordinary people can understand represents a key epistemological principle for the entire premodern rhetorical tradition. In sum, the orator only esteems the content of philosophy in proportion to the extent that it can be articulated clearly and make a practical difference in people's lives.

Both the rhetorical and philosophical traditions of education survive in classical culture, but in Ancient Greece the rhetorical model would prevail. Marrou attributes this "victory" to the rhetorical teachings of Isocrates: "learning to speak properly meant learning to think properly, and even to live properly"; thus, rhetoric functions as the "means for handing on everything that made man man" (196). Plato hesitates to recognize the essential bond between rhetoric and philosophy, as he regards dialectic as superior. But, after designating rhetoric as virtually worthless in the popular *Gorgias*, he eventually comes to tolerate the oratorical model as depicted in his *Phaedrus*. Although Kimball places him firmly in the philosophical tradition, Aristotle's *Rhetoric* understands that "rhetoric is the counterpart of dialectic" (1354a). Thus for a time, and to a certain degree, the philosophical line accepts the claims of rhetoric. Meanwhile, representatives of the premodern rhetorical tradition, with Isocrates as their guide, maintain that rhetoric represents the only art able to make the ideas of philosophy the property of all.

2.4 RHETORIC IN CLASSICAL ROME

Roman education inherits much from the Greeks, and Cicero (BC 106-43) would continue the Isocratean tradition that links rhetoric and philosophy. Cicero tells us that the education of this era was not "fixed by law, publicly supported, nor standardized" (*De*

republica bk. 4, ch. 3). In other words, the education of this era depended upon which arts one's instructor had mastered, and by and large this was rhetoric. Following Isocrates, in his *De Inventione* Cicero exclaims, "Wisdom without eloquence does little good . . . while eloquence without wisdom does positive harm" (bk. 1, ch. 1). Roman education still accepts the teachings of Plato and Aristotle in their proper sphere, but maintains the primacy of the oratorical tradition it receives from Isocrates that celebrates the union of eloquence and wisdom. Cicero inculcates the educational program of Isocrates and originates the liberal arts (*artes liberales*) ideal in Roman education. Kimball lists seven key characteristics of the *artes liberales* ideal housed with the premodern rhetorical tradition that Cicero develops and receives from Isocrates. As abridged here, education in the premodern rhetorical tradition does and believes the following:

- (1) Trains the good citizen to lead society;
- (2) Prescribes values and standards for character and conduct;
- (3) Respects commitment to the prescribed values and standards;
- (4) Adheres to a body of classical texts that provides the means to identify and agree upon prescribed values and standards;
- (5) Relies upon classical texts to provide the norms of learning that identify the elite who achieve greater merit by adopting their personal and civic virtues;
- (6) Maintains an unspeculative attitude toward traditional truth (and virtue) which is known, and receives expression through liberal education;

(7) Esteems liberal education for resulting in personal development and as such functions an end in itself. (*Orators* 37-39)

After Cicero, the premodern rhetorical tradition would preserve these ideals of Isocratean liberal education by way of Quintilian.

Like Cicero before him, Quintilian (AD c. 35-100) sees rhetorical education as the essential means by which future leaders use their liberal learning for societal benefit. According to Murphy, Quintilian's "*Institutio oratoria* is perhaps the most ambitious single treatise on education which the ancient world produced" (*Quintilian* xviii). Within this significant text Quintilian lays out his rhetorical ideal of the ethically attentive cultural representative, *vir bonus dicendi peritus*, which translates as "the good man speaking well." For Quintilian, effective rhetorical training should begin in the household from a very young age. Quintilian understands that a child's parents, nurses, and friends all play a part in the formation of a great orator. Quintilian's continual emphasis upon virtuous oratory as an imperative for those who would assume positions of leadership reflects his concern for the moral climate of his age.

Both Cicero and Quintilian assert that the orator must know philosophy and be able to express it well so that it makes a practical difference in the lives of the people who hear it. Beginning with Cicero and followed by Quintilian, Roman education adopts the educational model of Isocrates, not Plato. Together Cicero and Quintilian emphasize the necessity of moral education, a feat best achieved, from their perspective, through distinctly rhetorical learning. Following Isocrates, Roman education deems character development a rhetorical as much as a philosophical endeavor, for only through rhetorical action does ethical knowledge become virtue. Ironically, and contrary to Quintilian's

principles, Roman rhetoric gradually shifts away from the Ciceronian union of wisdom and eloquence back toward the mere style of sophistry. The technique-driven education that is characteristic of the Greek sophists begins to surface again in Rome. This movement, now considered the “Second Sophistic” or “Later Sophistic” (*Orators*, Kimball 39), would continue until the time of Augustine. The Second Sophistic represents the inauthentic pagan learning that many of the fathers of the early Christian church would mistakenly equate with rhetoric. As a whole, the classical learning that the premodern rhetorical tradition preserves, the educational model of Isocrates, Cicero, and Quintilian, finds a formidable challenge in justifying just how its ideals would line up with Christianity. In a time of great transition in the West, a moment situated at the end of late antiquity and the beginning of the Middle Ages, Augustine takes up the challenge.

2.5 RHETORIC IN THE MIDDLE AGES

As the dominance of the Western Roman Empire draws to a close, the fifth century AD demonstrates a time of great social reform. St. Augustine (AD 354-430) preserves the premodern rhetorical tradition amidst great turmoil and, ultimately, appropriates classical rhetorical theory toward Christian ends—a move that remains intact throughout the early Middle Ages. Murphy tells us that even Quintilian’s notion of *vir bonus dicendi peritus* falls into disrepute among the early Church fathers along with the entire Roman educational system (*Rhetoric* 46). However, Augustine retrieves the best of pagan learning, including rhetoric, in order to bring it into God’s service. Augustine believes in the necessity of rhetorical education for Christian use because

through rhetoric one learns how to express one's thoughts adequately (Murphy, "Metarhetorics," 204).

Following in the premodern rhetorical tradition, Augustine understands that morally improving the student accurately portrays the true task of rhetoric. However, in order for this to be possible, he knows that rhetoric requires moral content. Augustine defends the ideals of classical rhetoric during the Second Sophistic, a time in history that places the value of style above content. Teachers steeped in the Second Sophistic place value on "the way a thing is said, as opposed to *what* is said" (Murphy, *Rhetoric* 38). Through Augustine's work in *On Christian Doctrine* the premodern rhetorical tradition receives validation and simultaneously becomes modified for Christian ends. In *On Christian Doctrine*, Augustine's educational perspective follows from the idea that learning should be attentive to moral and intellectual formation that, for the most part, harmonizes with classical culture. Augustine clears the way for Christians to make use of the liberal arts curriculum. Augustine keeps the unity of eloquence and wisdom intact (*On Christian* 4.5.7-4.6.10), and helps the intellectuals of his age to see the benefits of pagan learning in the attainment of truth and virtue when filtered through Biblical scripture.

As a classically trained orator, Augustine brings rhetoric under the Christian umbrella because he understands its value. Augustine refuses to divorce rhetoric and philosophy because, like Isocrates, Cicero, and Quintilian before him, he has deep roots within the ideals of the oratorical tradition. Augustine understands the value of rhetoric for persuading his followers to act upon the beliefs they already hold. Augustine's

rhetoric and philosophy of education, or what Murphy calls his metarhetoric, centers on the idea that,

[E]ach man is an individual learner, placed in the universe by a God who has given him, as an individual, the means by which he may learn about the universe, therefore about God, and therefore about the role in the universe which God intends him to play. (“Metarhetorics” 205)

Augustine exhibits a rhetorical cast of mind that he obtains through classical learning, learning that he finds necessary for proper interpretation of difficult scriptures.

Augustine rejects certain aspects of the pagan arts, but praises the process of learning as a cultural ideal—an ideal that finds fulfillment when united with Christian objectives.

Gerald Press shows the foundational part *On Christian Doctrine* plays in bringing the premodern rhetorical tradition into Christian education. Press identifies that the doctrine in Augustine’s Christian educational commitments makes up for certain things he finds lacking in classical learning (114). In particular, the unity of Christian doctrine provides an intelligible view of the world whereas much of pagan learning has contradictory tendencies. Augustine also sees a more complete morality and pathway to happiness through the Christian doctrine that preaches salvation, redemption, and forgiveness—ideas that are foreign to pagan ears. Most importantly, Augustine makes learning a form of piety (115), and looks to Biblical scripture as the place where content and form are one.

Augustine rejects the characteristic showiness of sophistic oratory, but defends the classical principles of the premodern rhetorical tradition that merge substance with style. Augustine understands the importance of learning how to speak truth well, because

it makes it more accessible to diverse audiences. Augustine not only authorizes the adoption of pagan learning when used in ways that do not contradict Christian teaching, but he also sees its relative benefit for advancing Christian doctrine. The principle that permits Augustine to adopt pagan learning alongside Christianity, all truth is God's truth, discloses itself as typically rhetorical. By defending elements of human custom while simultaneously appropriating it to the needs of his historical moment, Augustine displays the sensibilities that place him in the premodern rhetorical tradition.

Augustine modifies the Roman rhetorical system because he sees that it bases itself upon political sensibilities that no longer held relevance ("St. Augustine", Leff 2). With a political system in shambles, Augustine synthesizes aspects of ancient rhetorical theory with his new faith. In his most explicit treatment of this connection, Book 4 of *On Christian Doctrine*, Augustine accepts much of the Ciceronian canon but knows that his moment requires that he modify it into something relatively new. Up until this time, Roman thought had emphasized the faculty of reason, but Augustine places a new focus upon faith. For Cicero, the merits of rhetoric came through the delivery of eloquent discourse within the civic arena. The rhetoric of Cicero takes the content of Greek philosophy for granted; however, Augustine refuses to take Greek philosophy or Cicero for granted in the places where they are incompatible with Christianity. Rather than banishing rhetoric, as many of the early Christian fathers had attempted, Augustine modifies Cicero and makes rhetoric useful in a Christian era. Because Augustine adapts Cicero's rhetorical theory he keeps rhetoric alive in an age where many believe rhetoric to be sinful.

Augustine carries forth the premodern rhetorical tradition by adopting the pagan liberal arts curriculum for ends consistent with his Christian faith. Augustine believes the learning of proper eloquence and style should not come by following rules, but by watching the fathers of the early Church, such as Ambrose, or by reading the scriptures of St. Paul. Augustine asserts that the high thoughts of Biblical scripture demand that they receive eloquent utterance. That is, the orator cannot help but speak eloquently because his material has a heavenly nature. As seen through his discussion of the various styles—grand style, middle style, and low style—Augustine recognizes the need for messages of truth to be constructed in a manner appropriate for the audience. But, for Augustine, human understanding of the truths found within the content of scripture cannot be complete apart from God. While God represents absolute Truth for Augustine, he denies the notion that humanity has the ability to know this Truth, or any truth for that matter, perfectly. Instead, any ounce of truth that humanity does have comes through revelation, not through humanity's own reason and action. With this move Augustine rejects the value of endless speculation. Augustine sees that some things can only be known in part, but knowing in part still allows for meaningful action. By modifying the educational precepts of the premodern rhetorical tradition in practical ways, and by using these rhetorical practices and principles to meet the needs of his historical moment, Augustine keeps the tradition alive.

2.6 PRECURSORS TO SCHOLASTICISM

Augustine follows in the footsteps of Isocrates, Cicero, and Quintilian by maintaining an open-system that avoids the reductive effects of technique and method,

but in time Boethius (AD 480-524) neglects Quintilian completely and provides a treatment of Cicero that clashes with Augustine's interpretation of him. In Boethius we see an inclination to perform a broad settlement of very diverse classical thinkers; he "depriv[es] them of their most original thoughts, so that a reconciliation becomes possible" (Barilli 42). Boethius sets out to translate the works of Plato and Aristotle, but ends up finishing less than half of Aristotle's *Organon*, and half of Plato's *Timaeus*. Although Boethius falls short of his goal, his works become "the sum total of classical Greek philosophy known to the early Middle Ages" (Kimball, *Orators* 47). During his lifetime the liberal arts curriculum remains within the rhetorical line, but his influence keeps the works of Aristotle alive for scholars in the philosophical line years later. The thirteenth-century scholastic appeal of Boethius impacts the premodern rhetorical tradition because his systematic account of the discipline in *De differentiis topicis* eventually becomes "the standard text on rhetoric" (Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric* 2nd ed. 203). Boethius focuses on Cicero's rhetorical theory in his technical *Topica* as opposed to his more expansive *De oratore*. Thus, within the works of Boethius, Ciceronian rhetoric becomes prescriptive and rule-based. In his *De differentiis topicis*, Boethius distinguishes the theoretical function of dialectic from rhetoric by placing what had hitherto been the province of rhetoric, *invention*, under dialectic (Grassi, *Rhetoric* 43). Boethius's subordination of rhetoric to dialectic eventually plays an important role in shaping the course of the liberal arts.

However, in the early Middle Ages the thought of Augustine remains central. The seven liberal arts, as accommodated to Christian ends, continue within the premodern rhetorical tradition. It stays this way through the encyclopedists up to Alcuin

(730-804), who joins the palace school of Charlemagne in Aachen, Germany (Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric* 2nd ed. 207). Whereas Boethius previously labels the four mathematical liberal arts—arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy—as the *quadrivium*, the palace school of Alcuin gives primacy to the three language liberal arts—grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric—and labels them the *trivium*. This period in time serves as a type of mini-Renaissance for rhetorical culture as the works of Quintilian and Cicero again find prominence. Alcuin preserves the seven characteristics of the *artes liberales* ideal in the premodern rhetorical tradition (Kimball 53-55). The scholars of Alcuin’s age, like the classical orators who had gone before them, “devoted themselves to preserving and transmitting the inherited wisdom unchanged and uncorrupted” (54). This feature of the premodern rhetorical tradition continually opposes the philosophical tradition’s ideal of never-ending speculation in all realms of knowledge, including wisdom and virtue.

The expanse of learning made available during the time of the Carolingian Empire works as the catalyst for the creation of the twelfth-century universities, and eventually flowers into the creation of a new medieval vocation—the scholar. In general, scholars of this age begin to embody the ideals of the classical philosophical tradition that was kept alive through the writings of Boethius, which includes its subordination of rhetoric. A key figure in the transition, John of Salisbury (1115-1180), frequently cites Quintilian in his *Metalogicon*, and exemplifies a favorable disposition toward the premodern rhetorical tradition’s belief in the unity of wisdom and eloquence. However, the manner in which John’s work treats rhetoric and dialectic separately causes Murphy to assert that “the *Metalogicon* itself contains the seeds of the new spirit which was to drive Quintilian

back to the library shelf” (*Middle Ages* 129) and “demonstrates the end of one era and the beginning of another” (130). Eventually, scholars would rediscover the “missing” works of Aristotle (the ones not translated by Boethius) and disseminate them broadly through the learning networks that Charlemagne had sanctioned. These philosophical texts encourage speculative and critical thought, a characteristic that opposes the ideals of the premodern rhetorical tradition. Thus, this period of transition demonstrates a heavy proclivity toward the primacy of dialectic in the liberal arts curriculum alongside the penchant to systematically classify the works of classical authors, including those of the premodern rhetorical tradition, into branches of philosophy. The medieval scholarly tendency to categorize rhetoric under ethical philosophy brings the liberal arts curriculum, for a time, securely into the philosophical tradition.

2.7 MEDIEVAL SCHOLASTICISM AND RENAISSANCE HUMANISM

Looking back on the late Middle Ages and Renaissance from our vantage point we see that, as contemporary scholars propose, the leading intellectuals of these times tend to fall within one of two fields of thought: *humanism* or *scholasticism*. The distinctive nature of humanism becomes apparent through its attempts to reclaim the premodern rhetorical tradition as a source of ethical knowledge; thus, humanism makes an effort to reunite the liberal arts curriculum. Scholasticism, on the other hand, favors the philosophical tradition, makes intellectual formation the ultimate goal of learning (instead of ethical formation), and divides the unity of the liberal arts curriculum (Kimball, *Orators* 67). In the late Middle Ages scholasticism gains ascendancy as it develops in the University of Paris, but the premodern rhetorical tradition survives

through the Italian humanists (Murphy, *Middle Ages* 110). The beginning of what would become a distinct culture arises in the early fourteenth century and works as a corrective response to the tendencies of scholasticism. This culture obtains the term *humanism* by later scholars, although the term is never used by those within the humanistic cluster.

The humanistic model of education relies upon the principles of the premodern rhetorical tradition to counter the philosophical tradition's scholastic agenda, which believes the endless search for certain knowledge and truth represents the ultimate goal of education. In *Humanism and the Culture of Renaissance Europe*, Nauert reminds us that humanism was never conceptualized as a rival philosophy to scholasticism (nor any philosophy for that matter), and that most of its disputes were related to the liberal arts curriculum (9). In the end, the humanism of this era denotes important philosophical implications (12). Among the most important of these implications recalls the rhetorical works of Cicero, the idea that education involves, by default, cultural and ethical development. The Ciceronian educational framework remains foundational for Italian humanists, and aids in their response to the dominant scholastic model of education, which emphasizes logic, science, and professional training. The humanists consider rhetorical education practical, whereas the logical and scientific education of the scholastics appears to them as merely speculative and, in many ways, irrelevant. For the humanists, the possession of knowledge and facts are useless if they do not assist in making practically wise decisions (15). The humanists believe that learning how to make wise moral decisions "based on probability, not certainty" (16) represents the purpose of education. The humanists understand that certainty makes dialogue nonsensical and that

whenever an educational system perceives itself as providing certainty of knowledge, it by necessity shuts out the premodern rhetorical tradition.

St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) appears as the prototypical scholastic in many contemporary accounts; however, Ong states that he “was regarded benignly by many humanists” (*Ramus* 57). In a manner similar to Augustine centuries earlier, Aquinas attempts to synthesize the newly rediscovered, and long neglected, Aristotelian texts of pagan learning with the doctrines of Christianity. Aquinas appears to align with the philosophical tradition when he states, “the final happiness of man consists in the contemplation of truth . . . [t]his is sought for its own sake, and is directed to no other end beyond itself” (*Summa contra gentiles* XXXVII). It remains an overreach to say that Aquinas opposes the principles of the premodern rhetorical tradition outright, because for the temper of his times and locale Aquinas’s “logical interests tended to be not those of the main scholastic philosophical tradition, but projected from theology” (Ong, *Ramus* 54). As an alternative, Ong identifies Peter of Spain (c. 1210-1277), with his highly quantified logic, as the key representative of scholastic philosophy. Although Nauert claims “there were many scholasticisms” (“Humanism as Method” 430), he still provides us with a broad summary of scholasticism’s educational outlook:

[The scholastics] agreed only in their tendency to look to Aristotle for guidance and in their possession of a common method of intellectual inquiry, the dialectical method. Nevertheless, this method, as Peter of Spain confidently declared, claimed the capacity to investigate, classify, and definitively resolve the major questions in all fields of learning.
 (“Humanism as Method” 430)

Thus, as the scholastic curriculum comes to entail more and more of the method that teaches certainty of truths, there is less and less time for students to learn the principles of the rhetorical discipline, which teaches how to navigate probability in human interactions.

In response to these developments, Petrarch (1305-1377) emerges as one of the earliest Italian humanists to promote rhetorical education by relying upon the classical writings of Cicero. Petrarch and his followers advance the ideals of humanism as a corrective measure to scholasticism, an educational agenda that

[I]nvariably implied criticism of the intellectualism and scientism of the scholastics . . . it also implied efforts to end the dominance of logic and science in education and to replace them with the ethical and rhetorical emphasis that had dominated ancient Roman education. (Nauert, *Humanism* 24)

Petrarch was no stranger to the recurring theme that Christian intellectuals have encountered throughout history; in sum, the dilemma asks: what role should the literature of pagan education play in the moral formation of the Christian? When considering the ethical content of pre-Christian authors Petrarch maintains a favorable disposition toward the dilemma, namely because of the major role the works of Cicero play in giving him moral insight (23). Petrarch's position in the history of rhetorical education is largely dictated by his belief that classical learning is the best means by which his historical moment can return to virtue.

Because of its scholarly rediscoveries, the Renaissance is another era of great transition in the West. In the early fifteenth century, Poggio Bracciolini (1380-1459)

promotes the rapid development of Italian humanism by finding a complete text of Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* in a dungeon at a monastery in Switzerland (Murphy, *Rhetoric* 357-58). Prior to this acquisition, the humanists had possessed only half of this work. Murphy praises the significance of the rediscovery of Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* for conveying the practical, civic-oriented nature of the humanistic educational program by offering "an explicit rationale for the use of rhetoric" (360) "while stressing the moral aspect of civic activity" (361). The text proves to be a vital source of learning in its own right, but it also helps to justify the humanist response to scholasticism that was already afoot. To a certain extent, the rediscovery and translation of lost classical texts becomes something of a pastime for the humanists and includes the rediscovery of a complete copy of Cicero's most profound work on rhetoric, *De oratore*, five years later. Contemporary scholarship in the liberal arts remains indebted to the scholarly attentiveness that the Renaissance dedicates toward classical texts. Eventually, the dissemination and availability of these texts would compound exponentially through Gutenberg's invention of the printing press (c. 1450).

The Renaissance arises as a cultural phenomenon before the advent of the printing press. At the same time, we must acknowledge, as Elizabeth Eisenstein emphasizes, "The Renaissance probably did less to spread printing than printing did to spread the Renaissance" (180). Eisenstein acknowledges that a key cultural effect of the printing press is its role in disseminating Italian humanism; however, its function of preserving classical texts is most important by far (180). The Carolingian era gives the practice of recovering lost classical texts a certain precedent, but never before had this practice encountered a technology that preserves texts in a manner that renders the need to recover

them again unlikely. As evidenced today by the fact that contemporary scholars still rely upon these same recovered Renaissance texts, the invention of the printing press makes the gains of the Italian Renaissance “sustained and permanent” (217). Since the printing press makes different types of learning available, its products appeal to those who are adept at both liberal and mechanical arts. Thus, the printing press bridges theory and practice in ways that were previously unthinkable. As the printing press continues to offer a wider influence, the humanists quickly grasp the importance of this tool for helping them shape public opinion in favor of their educational objectives. Although to a great extent the educational project of humanism continues to base itself upon an oral mode of thinking, the visual role of printing greatly influences humanistic thought. Thus, rhetorical education experiences a shift as a result of the change in emphasis from oral to chirographic thinking.

Purportedly a humanist, Peter Ramus (1515-1572) represents the chirographic method of thinking that print allows; in fact, he may be responsible for producing it. In many ways Ramus’s reaction to scholasticism ironically perpetuates scholasticism. In *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue*, Walter Ong argues that by removing the canon of invention from rhetoric, Ramus is responsible for dissolving the rhetorical way of life. Ramus elevates dialectic by giving it sole ownership over invention, and he denigrates rhetoric by making it simply a means of transmission. Ong further describes the effects of the Ramist method:

Speech is no longer a medium in which the human mind and sensibility lives. It is resented, rather, as an accretion to thought . . . the perfect

rhetoric would be no rhetoric at all. Thought becomes a private, or even an antisocial enterprise. (291)

Within the Ramist educational project rhetoric loses its emphasis upon dialogue and ends up being mere monologue. The communal features of rhetorical education are abandoned, and “speaking is directed to a world where even persons respond only as objects—that is, say nothing back” (287). The Ramist method negatively impacts rhetorical education because it separates reason from language. By separating the thought process from speech Ramus extends a view of language that makes rhetoric value-free and irrelevant to the discovery of truth. A value-free rhetoric privatizes thinking because it makes public discourse unnecessary for thought. According to Nauert, “Ramus did much to make intellectual method a hot issue and so to prepare the way for thinkers of the next century, notably [Francis] Bacon and [René] Descartes, to propose new methods for the pursuit of truth” (*Humanism* 217). Although the liberal arts remain housed within the oratorical tradition though the Reformation, rhetoric loses its educational prestige as a result of the print-based mode of thinking that Ramist method brings into the world.

2.8 ENLIGHTENMENT AND COUNTER-ENLIGHTENMENT

Ramism establishes a state of mind that makes the diffusion of method through Bacon (1561-1626) and Descartes (1596-1650) possible. Out of this framework Bacon broadens the philosophical ideal, and as Lewis recognizes, the value of pursuing knowledge as an end in itself becomes transformed: “The true object [of knowledge] is to extend Man’s power to the performance of all things possible” (*Abolition* 78). With

Bacon, the philosophical tradition's ideal, the endless pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, becomes the endless pursuit of knowledge to increase the power of man. Here we see the causal link of the philosophical ideal with modernity. When Bacon transforms the philosophical ideal into the endless pursuit of power and progress, he makes science the basis of power and progress, which makes power and progress ends in themselves. According to Neil Postman, "Bacon was a master propagandist, who knew well the history of science but saw science not as a record of speculative opinion but as the record of what those opinions had enabled man to do" (*Technopoly* 37). Postman knows that we can better understand the modern world through Bacon's belief that "the improvement of men's minds and the improvement of his lot are one and the same thing" (37). Postman shows us that Bacon helps to set the stage for the mentality of modern education, which accepts and celebrates the idea that knowledge is power. Because of this, "any conception of God's design certainly lost much of its power and meaning, and with that loss went the satisfactions of a culture in which moral and intellectual values were integrated" (38).

The Ramist demotion of rhetorical thought also inspires the methodic doubt and rationalism of Descartes. This new critical method of learning places the burden of proof upon tradition and ushers in the beginnings of modern education as we know it. One of the last Italian humanists, Giambattista Vico (1668-1744), continues in the premodern rhetorical tradition by rejecting the Cartesian fallacy that makes truth either all or nothing, either certain or probable, and stands as a key figure in the Counter-Enlightenment. Although the chirographic current of thought progresses in the universities of his time, Vico understands that the function of orality in theory and

practice cannot be abandoned from education. Vico seeks to save the educational value of rhetoric from the likes of Descartes by explicating its inherent communal and epistemological function—*sensus communis*, or common sense. In *The New Science* Vico claims, “Common sense is judgment without reflection, shared by an entire class, an entire people, an entire nation, or the entire human race” (XII.142). For Vico, individuals cannot possess *sensus communis* alone; it belongs to the community. *Sensus communis* operates as an unreflective faculty that particular communities share in order to make practical decisions regarding daily life. Because of this, *sensus communis* functions as the source of *phronēsis*, or practical reason. As was true of Augustine centuries earlier, Vico maintains the premodern rhetorical tradition through the concept of *sensus communis* during a time of transition within social, political, and religious areas of existence. Both Vico and Augustine know that truth must be grounded within the community, that *sense* must be something the group has in *common*.

In response to Descartes, Vico demonstrates that society needs rhetoric in order to articulate the shared values that will advance important societal agendas. Vico revitalizes the premodern rhetorical tradition’s understanding of *sensus communis* by explaining that the shared values of society are embedded within language and are often unreflective. According to John D. Schaeffer, Vico operates within the premodern rhetorical tradition that “develops *sensus communis* as an epistemological principle” (*Sensus Communis* 150). Vico believes that *sensus communis* continues to operate independently from its recognition. In other words, even though the principle of *sensus communis* remains operationally null in modern educational contexts, that does not make it any less real, for as long as human beings interact with one another it will continue to operate independent

from our recognition. However, there are implications for the community, which remains unaware of its role in constituting knowledge—the space by which the content of *sensus communis* receives communal reflection gets lost. Thus, for Vico, *sensus communis* offers more than just content; it also offers a “space” for dialogue to occur in the community. Schaeffer states that Vico’s *sensus communis* “says that community must have some shared values, some limits to its tolerances of differences, and it requires that this limit exist not merely in theory but in practice: in education, in law, and in politics” (150). Both the content and space of *sensus communis* belongs to the community.

In his *Studies in Words*, C. S. Lewis captures the progression of common sense as it has historically been defined and understood. Lewis notes how Descartes alters common sense by supporting “a growing tendency to assign moral premises to some faculty other than reason, so that reason (or *sense*) is now concerned only with truth, not also with good” (153). Lewis’s insight into the historical meaning of *sensus communis* sheds light, albeit implicitly, on the specific tension the term experiences within the interplay of the premodern rhetorical and philosophical traditions. Walter Ong’s *Orality and Literacy* attempts to account for the shift in thinking from oral/aural to visual, and notices how the concept of *sensus communis* changes alongside this shift of mind. Ong addresses the way in which the values of a given oral society are both disseminated and retained by the spoken word. When the communal representative of an oral society addresses the people, that person uses the spoken word, and this word carries within itself the shared values that it requires for its interpretation. Both the content and the form of public address perpetuates and preserves the shared values of a given oral society. When

thought of in this way, rhetoric displays how it serves an important cultural function in oral societies and why it stands as the most practical of disciplines.

2.9 MODERN EDUCATION

To review, Plato stands at the beginning of the philosophical tradition's tendency to bring the language and values of oral society under scrutiny. In what was previously implicit and assumed, Plato interrogates language and values through his dialectical method. Starting with Plato, the philosophical school believes that individuals can ascertain truth apart from rhetoric and that truth does not require eloquence to make it more appealing for action. This line of thinking toward rhetoric extends from Plato through Boethius to the scholastics, and eventually allows the self-proclaimed humanist, Ramus, to nearly extinguish the premodern rhetorical tradition when he attempts to make all discourse logical. Ramus takes the audience right out of questions related to truth, and simultaneously renders *sensus communis* null. The Ramist method paves the way for Bacon's scientific method and the methodic doubt of Descartes, both of which make probable knowledge false and further minimize the province of rhetoric.

When discourse becomes equated with logic, rhetorical eloquence turns into mere embellishment. Additionally, when accessing truth supposedly functions apart from discourse, context becomes equally banal. When rhetoric becomes unnecessary for conveying ideas, discourse becomes scientific and thinking becomes privatized. According to Ernesto Grassi, "modern thought begins with Descartes" (*Rhetoric* 71), thus announcing the birth of modern education. Vico describes the critical method of Descartes as a defining characteristic of the education we call modern. Starting with

Descartes, modern education's a priori posture toward received knowledge shows itself as critical to the core. Furthermore, and perhaps more to Vico's point, critical method implies that truth must be certain, not probable. This does not mean that Vico rejects critical thinking in general; he rejects it only when it prohibits the ability for society to accept as true the probable knowledge that likely cannot be verified through logic. The modern line of thinking that emerges from the belief that truth must be objectively certain is logical positivism. Although less popular today as a general theory of knowledge among academics, the ideas of logical positivism continue to thrive in the unreflective practices of individuals in contemporary educational milieus influenced by modernity. The essence of logical positivism endures wherever areas of knowledge that cannot be proven scientifically are rendered merely subjective. Logical positivism takes ethics and values right out of questions related to truth. Modern education underscores the idea that, if truth exists, it should inevitably follow that truth can be discovered objectively by the individual apart from the community. Since only scientific truth meets this criterion, modern education renders traditional values irrelevant.

Modern education makes the means to knowledge and truth a method or technique in place of tradition and the community. In *On the Study Methods of Our Time*, Vico foresees the inevitable result of Cartesian method upon education:

But the greatest drawback of our [Cartesian] educational methods is that we pay an excessive amount of attention to the natural sciences and not enough to ethics. Our chief fault is that we disregard that part of ethics which treats of human character, of its dispositions, its passions, and of the manner of adjusting these factors to public life and eloquence. We neglect

that discipline [rhetoric] which deals with the differential features of the virtues and vices, with good and bad behavior-patterns. (VII)

Vico recognizes that since “the only target of [Cartesian] intellectual endeavors is truth,” those trained according to its method “are unable to engage in the life of the community, to conduct themselves with sufficient wisdom and prudence” (VII). For Vico, an inherent problem to a merely speculative search for truth is that it divorces thought from action. Modern education makes certain truth its “single end” and simultaneously defines where and where not, how and how not, one discovers such truth. Specifically, modern education ignores the traditional sources of knowledge that dictate moral action because their dictates are not scientifically certain. Vico understands that when the pursuit of certain truth becomes the singular aim of education moral action suffers. Modern education exalts method and technique as the means by which individuals must order their lives, a move that takes the place of what had traditionally been the role of virtue and wisdom. Modern education ignores traditional understandings of the good and, through method and technique, posits in its place a schema that perpetuates its own values, such as standardization, efficiency and progress.

At present the worldview of scientism remains operative as the philosophical position of modern education despite having faulty premises. Through its chief value, progress, scientism carries within itself the presupposition that the facts of science, as well as their technological applications, are inevitable and inherently good. Lewis suggests that the present justification of scientism as an educational worldview owes much to Bacon for first recognizing that in science, “the true object is to extend Man’s power to the performance of all things possible” (*Abolition* 78). Science has shown an

ability to improve the living conditions of the less fortunate, and through this Bacon initiates a process that gives the facts of science and its technological applications both practical utility and spiritual worth in advancing the work of God. Descartes further advances the modern method of doubt into the public mind, but with T. H. Huxley's evolutionism we see the decisive move that would make scientism a distinct worldview.

By picturing science as evolving from religion, Huxley (1825-1895) subordinates the authority of religion to science but still manages to keep the prophetic and spiritual significance of science's role in bettering the human condition. In *Rhetorical Darwinism*, Thomas Lessl tells the complex story of how Huxley achieves this feat by applying the scientific concept of evolution to humanity's relationship to knowledge in general. The scientific method has already been thought of as an autonomous and reliable criterion for discovering truths about the natural world, so Huxley simply takes advantage of this social standing to juxtapose it with the errors of previous learning. Lessl shows us how Huxley's scientism, through evolutionism, uses the authority of the taken for granted premodern educational model in order to achieve its precedence in education:

By placing the flawed inquiries of past travelers within a developmental progression leading up to the certainties of contemporary science, [Huxley] could show that modern science was itself the product of a natural development—and thus the heir to all former enterprises of discovery. Implicitly, then, Huxley constructs an evolutionary analogy or metaphor that mythologizes the unfolding world of human knowledge by identifying it with the model of biological evolution. Biological evolution

has become the window through which the reader sees the history of learning. (*Rhetorical Darwinism* 220)

Thus, the authority of scientism rests upon the recognition that the methods of science are the heir apparent to determining the truth-value of all previous systems of knowledge. Huxley depicts human knowledge reception through the metaphor of evolution and, when accepted, makes a decisive turn for the modern justification of scientism as a worldview. With this move Huxley follows in the footsteps of Ramus, Bacon, and Descartes and further undermines the premodern rhetorical way of life that pictures the wisdom and knowledge of objective value as fixed and eternal. Henceforth, scientism self-legitimizes itself by setting the agenda of what makes knowledge valuable (e.g. utility and technological benefits), thus furthering its ability to claim superiority over premodern accounts of value. By maintaining this level of hegemony, scientism further determines what counts as knowledge (science) and what justifies knowledge (method).

2.10 CONCLUSION

Rhetorical education suffocates in a society that makes moral questions insignificant and conceives of knowledge as private. Modern education reveals the reentry of the “Platonic rhetorical heresy” into contemporary educational practices, “the belief that the man possessed of truth will *ipso facto* be able to communicate the truth to others” (Murphy, *Middle Ages* 60). However, the premodern rhetorical tradition from Isocrates to Vico argues just the opposite. As the modern university increasingly specializes it becomes more prevalent for knowledge to stagnate within each particular discipline’s specialized discourse. Therefore, individuals with a modern education lack

the imperative to communicate knowledge—an education bent upon speculative truth not only fails to convey that human development requires that we learn how to communicate our beliefs about knowledge and truth, but it also implies that human beings lack the ability to do so successfully.

Thus, different assumptions about human nature and human abilities frame the distinctions between the rhetorical and philosophical traditions of premodernity. The premodern rhetorical tradition, of which Lewis belongs, operates under the assumption that human development requires that we learn how to engage publicly in meaningful, practical reasoning. After the Ramist method nearly abolishes the principles of the premodern rhetorical tradition, the philosophical tradition's ideal of endless speculation of knowledge for its own sake undergoes a transformation under the methods of Bacon and Descartes. Modern education's worldview of scientism becomes possible through the establishment of method from Ramus to Bacon to Descartes. Once the educational ideals of the premodern rhetorical tradition loses out to method, the decline of the public sphere continues indefinitely through the fragmentation and specialization of the disciplines.

While both premodern philosophical and rhetorical education considers virtue ethics among its defining subject matter, the premodern rhetorical tradition differs in that it seeks to move people to put the virtues into action rather than resting content by merely contemplating them. The premodern rhetorical tradition stresses the role of the community in the attainment of virtue both theoretically and practically, for the virtues can impact character development only when they are practiced. The profound shift from rhetorical learning in antiquity to anti-rhetorical learning in modernity announces one of

the most telling stories of Western thought, and removing the role of virtue in education marks this shift.

Whether or not virtue can be taught remains an open question from antiquity to modern times. However, from the earliest accounts of the premodern rhetorical tradition the purpose of education has been to inculcate virtue (Kimball, “Founders” 228). In response to the excesses of the sophists, the Platonic school advocates the never-ending search for truth as the purpose of education. Meanwhile, Isocrates first warns against sophistic technique when it comes at the expense of virtue and second, Platonic dialectic when it comes at the expense of rhetoric. The Platonists praise endless speculation (never-ending search for truth), the sophists praise endless performance (never-ending disregard for truth), and Isocrates praises the performance of truth that matters here and now. Isocrates cannot understand the point of ascertaining truth that does not make a practical difference in people’s lives, and he believes one achieves the practical difference through the rhetorical ability to communicate truths obtained by philosophical study. The educational model of Isocrates uses rhetoric to test the gains of philosophy in order to see if they actually matter to one’s daily life.

Throughout history the premodern rhetorical tradition serves as an antidote to bad philosophy, and the roots of modern education’s scientific worldview come about when rhetoric gives way to method. Premodern rhetorical education advances the virtues of the community by training the sentiments and motives of the next generation. By way of method, modern education grows out of the philosophical ideal divorced from its rhetorical counterpart. On the face of it, modern education appears to distance itself from questions of value, but in actuality it advances its own values. Such an education leaves

the impression that questions of ethics and virtue can be, and already have been, solved logically, but the premodern rhetorical tradition teaches that a virtuous life remains impossible without the heart. Removing the heart from the educational process gives human beings the character of a machine, a reality that Lewis describes as the “abolition of man.”

CHAPTER THREE

THE ABOLITION OF MAN:

A RHETORIC AND PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

C. S. Lewis's rhetoric and philosophy of education supports the distinctive principles and practices of the premodern rhetorical tradition. The low status of moral education in modern times emerges as a common theme in *The Abolition of Man*. Lewis believes that moral education must result in the performance of virtuous habits. Likewise, from the standpoint of the premodern rhetorical tradition, moral education involves character development, not mere intellectual attainment. Lewis aligns with the premodern rhetorical tradition because he emphasizes the role of virtue in education. For Lewis, one does not discover or learn virtue in the abstract; rather, one receives virtue through practical communal interaction and develops it through action. *The Abolition of Man* offers an account of the common values that shape the virtues that humanity shares across time and space. For brevity's sake Lewis refers to these values as the *Tao*. Through his discussion of the *Tao*, Lewis offers a compelling concept that resonates with the rhetorical principle of *sensus communis*. Although he understands that certain cultures may place a different emphasis upon particular virtues, in the *Tao* Lewis locates themes of morality that are consistent across cultures. The manner in which Lewis argues for the objective role of the community and the *Tao* in the process of inculcating virtue supports the premodern rhetorical tradition's educational ideals.

In *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis provides a three-chapter response to the changing landscape of education under the influence of what he elsewhere calls *scientism*. In the first chapter, Lewis looks at how modern education actively influences his contemporary moment. How modern education differs from the traditional educational process affords Lewis the subject matter for chapter two. In the final chapter, Lewis presents what he foresees as the inevitable result of modern education, the “abolition of man.” The bulk of this chapter identifies the ways in which *The Abolition of Man*’s position on education aligns with principles of the premodern rhetorical tradition as it relates to action, virtue, the will, objective value, *sensus communis*, and practical reason. This chapter then considers the negative characteristics of modern education according to Lewis and how he relies upon principles of the premodern rhetorical tradition in order to employ his critique. Finally, this chapter contemplates what Lewis foresees as the practical result of modern education, the abolition of man, and where this places the ideals of the premodern rhetorical tradition for future generations.

3.2 THE WORLD OF ACTION

The Abolition of Man aligns with the principles and practices of the premodern rhetorical tradition that highlight the importance of action. For meaningful action to be possible, Lewis believes there must be objectivity to the communal values one receives within a particular society. Additionally, consistent with the premodern rhetorical tradition, he posits that one must receive these values in an unspeculative capacity. When Lewis asserts that “an open [speculative] mind about the ultimate foundations either of Theoretical or of Practical Reason is idiocy” (48), he follows the Augustinian principle,

which argues that belief precedes understanding. Lewis summarily rejects a speculative attitude toward the *Tao* because the objective values of the *Tao* simply cannot be proven in any logical capacity:

You may, on the other hand, regard them as rational—nay as rationality itself—as things so obviously reasonable that they neither demand nor admit proof. But then you must allow that Reason can be practical, that an *ought* must not be dismissed because it cannot produce some *is* as its credential. If nothing is self-evident, nothing can be proved. Similarly if nothing is obligatory for its own sake, nothing is obligatory at all. (40)

For Lewis, moral knowledge exists in the realm of probability, not logical certainty. Lewis does not attempt to justify his stance on objective value with proof; instead, he turns the tables and invites skeptics to see that one cannot discredit objective value on that account. Objective value cannot be proven or disproven, and scrutinizing value through the rules of logical certainty runs contrary to the premodern rhetorical tradition. Lewis rejects the idea that moral values are merely hypothetical or theoretical; instead, they are practical. In the typical subjective-objective dichotomy, subjectivism functions as opinion-based whereas objectivism functions as fact-based. However, Lewis thinks of values as objective in the same way that lived experience takes place as objective. That is, values are independent of one's personal existence but still permeate personal existence.

For Lewis, value resides in the *Tao* as an objective residue that influences the hearts and minds of individuals at an unreflective level. In terms of moral education, the values of the *Tao* reach one's heart and form the ground from which one practically

reasons. Lewis realizes that any attempt to prove or disprove the objective value of the Tao inevitably causes virtuous action to atrophy. In other words, one loses the motivation to act in accordance with objective value when one places the idea of value onto the reflective plane and thereby judges for oneself its truth or falsity. Lewis understands that even if the moral content of the *Tao* could be proven intellectually, there still requires something else which must influence the will to act in accordance with those values.

Lewis believes that the entire motive for virtuous action ultimately stems from the objective value that the *Tao* provides, and this happens regardless of conscious reflection. Only the *Tao* supplies the persuasive support for moral action:

All the practical principles...are there from time immemorial in the *Tao*.
But they are nowhere else. Unless you accept these without question as
being to the world of action what axioms are to the world of theory, you
can have no practical principles whatever. (40)

Elsewhere Lewis uses the same phrase uttered above, “the world of action,” and links it explicitly to rhetoric: “the end of rhetoric is in the world of action” (*Preface* 53). By taking both excerpts together we see the privileged status that Lewis gives to rhetoric. For Lewis, rhetoric plays a crucial role in moving people to put the principles of the *Tao* into action. Rhetoric alone cannot provide the motivation for action—that is the *Tao*—but rhetoric works “by using language to control what already exists in our minds . . . to produce in our minds some practical resolve” (53). Rhetoric reminds us of what the *Tao* would have us do. Thus, when rhetoric works alongside the ethical demands of the *Tao*

we are confronted with an ethical choice. We are reminded that non-action itself remains a choice.

Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue* teaches us that scholarship on theories about the common good and the "ought" have typically been a debate for ethical philosophy. But that which obliges one to put that good into practice remains the province of rhetoric. The premodern rhetorical tradition combines philosophical theory with rhetorical action to arrive at *praxis*, or theory-informed action. Throughout *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis shows his lack of confidence in the goal of an education that stresses knowledge apart from action. Lewis understands that knowledge of the common good, or the "ought," remains useless unless one puts it into practice; through this he displays his belief that moral education ought to produce practical results. In *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis reflects upon a type of education that has its origin in areas of human existence that are oftentimes unreflective. Until Aristotle begins theorizing about it in Ancient Greece, rhetorical practice remains an unreflective activity for much of human experience. That rhetoric has entered human consciousness does not change the fact that it still operates effectively in practice without one being schooled in its principles. In this way, rhetorical education accounts for both the reflective and unreflective springs of human action.

That Lewis advocates for a type of education that falls within the purview of the premodern rhetorical tradition becomes more apparent when we consider the conservative nature of the oral societies he defends. Premodern oral societies maintain a level of conservatism in the sense that ordinary members feel an obligation to protect, not diminish, moral knowledge. In this way, education in oral societies tends to follow the ideals of the premodern rhetorical tradition, especially when it comes to the idea of

objective value. Lewis describes the doctrine of objective value as “the belief that certain attitudes are really true, and others really false, to the kind of thing the universe is and the kind of things we are” (18). Again, Lewis does not attempt to prove, nor does he think it possible to prove, the existence of objective value; rather, he draws attention to the fact that traditional societies tend to accept this idea uncritically. Nonetheless, these attitudes that can be true or false are unreflective, for as Lewis puts it, “No emotion is, in itself, a judgement” (18). By this Lewis means that one does not first carefully think about the proper emotion they should have in a given case and then make a conscious decision to offer it as the fitting response; instead, it happens “in the moment” as a type of habit.

The Screwtape Letters further illustrates Lewis’s thoughtfulness and persistence when it comes to the issue of habitual action. Lewis notes how the unreflective premodern habit, which “connected thinking with doing” (1), no longer exists in a modern age. Lewis sees that in modern times it has become socially acceptable for one to think, believe, and know about any number of things without also sensing the need to act upon those thoughts, beliefs, and knowledge. This works to the advantage of the demonic tempters in *The Screwtape Letters* because they seem to understand better than their patient that faith appears through action. Because of this, unsurprisingly, the tempters are commanded in the following fashion:

The great thing is to prevent his [the patient] doing anything. As long as he does not convert it into action, it does not matter how much he thinks about this new repentance. . . . Let him do anything but act. No amount of piety in his imagination and affections will harm us if we can keep it out of his will . . . active habits are strengthened by repetition but passive ones

are weakened. The more often he feels without acting, the less he will be able ever to act, and, in the long run, the less he will be able to feel. (66-67)

In this example Lewis highlights the spiritual implications of action, and through it a more general rhetorical principle emerges: we become virtuous not through knowledge alone, but by doing what we believe.

3.3 VIRTUE ETHICS

The traditional view of virtue, as Lewis argues, presents implications for both the mind and the heart. Lewis questions the possibility that a theoretical argument, for or against objective value, can provide the motivation to act virtuously, because in either case “It still remains true that no justification of virtue will enable a man to be virtuous” (*Abolition* 24). The motivation to act virtuously comes from the values that have shaped one’s moral and intellectual disposition. Lewis displays his profound respect for the extant texts of premodern oral societies because he thinks of them as authoritative deposits of traditional values and standards. Lewis looks at these texts as an historical record of how traditional values are transmitted through the discourse and example of people, not through educational techniques and methods. Lewis sees that practicing virtue does not automatically follow from having knowledge of virtue. Even though people cannot intentionally practice the virtues without having knowledge of them, they can know the virtues without practicing them. Because of this, the speculative pursuit of ethical knowledge for its own sake fails as an obligatory moral educational ideal for Lewis. Instead, those things that are defended for their own sake are the virtuous

practices that stem from the traditional values that are already known. In *Mere Christianity*, Lewis praises the one who chooses to practice virtue simply for its own sake:

We might think that, provided you did the right thing, it did not matter how or why you did it—whether you did it willingly or unwillingly, sulkily or cheerfully, through fear of public opinion or for its own sake. But the truth is that right actions done for the wrong reason do not help to build the internal quality or character called a ‘virtue’, and it is this quality or character that really matters. (81)

In this excerpt we can see how the ethical posture that Lewis specifies as favorable corresponds well to the type of character that moral education in the premodern rhetorical tradition sought to produce.

Although Lewis rejects the educational ideal that values the endless pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, in *The Abolition of Man* he constructively utilizes the thought of Plato and Aristotle in ways that show why the premodern philosophical tradition cannot be outright ignored. On this point Lewis coincides substantially with MacIntyre’s assessment that the only mode of thought that can counteract modernity “will be in *something like* Aristotelian terms or not at all” (*After Virtue* 118). Both Lewis and MacIntyre understand that the Aristotelian backdrop, or worldview, represents the unreflective form of moral thought that was operative for pagans and Christians alike in premodern society. MacIntyre rightly ascertains that our distinctively modern moral problems commence when this backdrop gets dispensed with on account of the Enlightenment project that tries to justify morality. Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) is

among the first to critique the Enlightenment's problematic moral framework; however, he thinks the solution is to reject all objective moral values. Although Nietzsche has genuine insight into the moral problems of modernity, his so-called solution cannot rightfully do away with the legitimacy of objective value as it exists within the premodern moral framework. Nietzsche overlooks the fact that modern morality avoids, and thus never discredits, the primary question of premodern morality: what sort of person am I to become? The answer to this question does not show up through theory, but through practices that have a certain goal in mind. In contrast, as MacIntyre identifies, "on the modern view the justification of the virtues depends upon some prior justification of rules and principles" (119). Thus, modernity changes the goal of virtue by placing it into a framework that leads people to obey a set of rules. When MacIntyre considers how the justification of rules and principles actually operates within a moral framework, it leads him to describe modern moral thought as greatly confused, for "we need to attend to *virtues* in the first place in order to understand the function and authority of rules" (119).

Both Lewis and MacIntyre recognize that people within the premodern moral framework focus on becoming a certain type of person and not on following a set of rules. When Nietzsche rejects the basis of a rules-based morality he affirms the insights of Lewis and MacIntyre. However, Nietzsche's unmitigated critique of objective value fails to dispense with the validity of the premodern morality that gives primacy to virtuous practices, not to rules. MacIntyre sees that the premodern awareness of virtue springs from a particular communal conception of the good life before ever functioning as rules and precepts. In any case, this essential premodern moral agreement does not

imply that early Christians agree with the content of the virtues in the Aristotelian account; as a case in point, the former considers humility a virtue whereas for the latter it remains a vice. The New Testament view of the virtues, as MacIntyre argues, unites with the Aristotelian account not necessarily in their content, but in their form, for “they have the same logical and conceptual structure” (184). The New Testament and Aristotelian economies of thought exhibit a remarkable agreement concerning the form of the virtues; from their perspective the virtues are “a quality the exercise of which leads to the achievement of the human *telos*” (184).

In *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis places select excerpts from traditional moral texts side by side in order to illustrate the general premodern agreement on the form of the cardinal virtues. For Lewis, these virtues are passed on through moral education that requires a shared belief in objective value, for without it moral instruction has no authority. Beginning with “the Platonic attack on the Greek poetic tradition” (Havelock x), the philosophical tradition has a record of mistrusting humble submission to authority with regard to moral instruction and the virtues, and in its place it makes the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake the ideal task of education. The pursuit of knowledge for its own sake implies that additional, yet unidentified, ethical knowledge exists and simply needs to be discovered. Although representatives of this tradition, such as Plato and Aristotle, believe and practice traditional virtue, the philosophical ideal undermines belief in objective value and ignores the enactment of traditional virtue because it suggests that morality can be improved through more knowledge alone. Despite having educational ideals that differ from the philosophical tradition, the premodern rhetorical tradition recognizes that rhetoric and philosophy are fundamentally interdependent for transmitting

knowledge. The premodern rhetorical tradition does not oppose pursuing knowledge, but it provides boundaries that cannot be crossed through its requirement that knowledge needs to be both articulated and tested publicly. For the majority of Western history the premodern rhetorical tradition represents the guiding ideals of liberal arts education, and helps to limit the effects of the philosophical ideal by keeping it on a type of communal leash.

From Isocrates through Augustine to Vico, the premodern rhetorical tradition keeps practical reason and *sensus communis* intact; by doing so, it promotes good philosophy that results in virtuous practice. As understood in this context, when Lewis brings Augustine's definition of virtue into his rhetoric and philosophy of education he further exhibits the fundamental alliance he has with the ideals of the premodern rhetorical tradition. Lewis relies upon Augustine to begin his discussion of virtue in the first chapter of *The Abolition of Man* by briefly mentioning a passage from *City of God*: "St. Augustine defines virtue as *ordo amoris*, the ordinate condition of the affections in which every object is accorded that kind of degree of love which is appropriate to it" (*Abolition* 16). In order to preserve the integrity of Augustine's position on virtue, as well as to highlight its significance for *The Abolition of Man*, it is necessary to look at the passage from which Lewis extracts *ordo amoris*, or rightly ordered love, in its full context:

We must, however, observe right order even in our love for the very love by which we love that which is worthy to be loved, so that there may be in us that virtue which enables us to live well. Hence, it seems to me that a brief and true definition of virtue is 'rightly ordered love'. (XV.22)

Ordo amoris implies that love functions as an action based upon a choice that corresponds to an ordered reality, and holding this view means that love cannot be a mere emotion or something that simply happens to us. In *The Four Loves* Lewis, classifies love into various types: affection, friendship, *eros*, and charity. Lewis understands that these loves share certain characteristics with each other because they belong to the same family. Because of its spiritual origin Lewis considers charity a distinctly Christian virtue, which the other three natural loves point toward by having an intrinsic aspiration to develop in ways that resemble it. In *The Abolition of Man*, the positive Law of General Beneficence illustrates how the natural loves have an active component that points toward Christian charity. Since these natural loves presuppose that one chooses to perform love, they operate much like the distinctly Christian virtue of charity. Both Lewis and Augustine believe that Christian love, like all sentiments and natural loves containing a moral component, functions as a choice that one can and must learn to make:

[L]ove, in the Christian sense, does not mean an emotion. It is a state not of the feelings but of the will; that state of the will which we have naturally about ourselves, and must learn to have about other people.

(*Mere Christianity* 129)

Since the choices one makes in the realm of sentiment can be objectively true or false, Lewis claims, “emotional states can be in harmony with reason (when we feel liking for what ought to be approved) or out of harmony with reason” (*Abolition* 19). Lewis thinks the true task of education comes through teaching those right responses that align with the objective order of reality. Again, in *Mere Christianity*, Lewis remarks that one’s disposition and emotions “do not excuse them from . . . learning charity” (130); he

counsels us to “not waste time bothering whether you ‘love’ your neighbor; act as if you did” (131). Lewis reiterates the thought of Augustine by viewing love as a distinct choice of the will. One performs the actions of love and all other virtues through their will first; thus, in the realm of virtue the will takes precedence over emotion.

3.4 PRIMACY OF THE WILL

Lewis causes one to remember that love functions as a product of the will, showing that what matters most in the development of charitable character comes not through the *knowledge* of loving one’s neighbor, but rather through the *motivation* that leads one to choose the actions appropriate to that end. Lewis’s discussion of virtue in *The Abolition of Man* follows this line by stressing the fact that the virtues are questions of the will, and virtuous character begins with the desire to choose virtuous acts even when one does not feel like it. Lewis argues that one must first believe that virtuous actions are worth performing before, and irrespective of, finding emotional or logical support. The motivation for action comes from that which ones desires, or loves. For Lewis and Augustine, *ordo amoris* indicates that reality follows an objective order of value, and virtue consists precisely in appropriating love in the proper measure to things that are consistent with this order of value. On the other hand, vice comes by loving things in a manner disproportionate to the objective order of value. For Lewis and Augustine alike the presence of vice means that willful disorder exists in the human heart. This belief suggests that simply having more knowledge of virtue does not by default enable someone to be virtuous. Simply put, thinking of vice as willful disorder implies that moral education cannot be achieved through more philosophical instruction.

Instead, from this perspective moral education displays itself as primarily a rhetorical endeavor of influencing the will to virtuous action.

Lewis understands that advocating action to the exclusion of the will introduces duplicity. Through the elemental faculty of the will one chooses particular actions over and against other possibilities. The will cannot be divorced from questions related to *why*, because the will works against the backdrop of motive. For Augustine, the full extent of rightly ordered love becomes possible only through obedience to God, as the Christian motivation for virtuous action comes when one places God first in their heart. Since the Christian motive for action comes through obedience to God, and since God enables obedience, how does Lewis theorize about why certain virtuous actions are still performed for those without this belief? For Lewis, these Christian positions do not suggest that virtue cannot be performed without belief in God. Lewis believes that virtue can be performed apart from belief in God but not apart from God. Lewis realizes that the motivation for virtue comes by being situated within a particular common sense that originates with God, even if this goes unrecognized.

In *Mere Christianity*, Lewis distinguishes the Christian virtues from general virtues. The Christian virtues are behavioral expectations that do not make sense apart from their connection to a community of people who are following Jesus Christ. In *The Four Loves*, Lewis makes it clear that all human beings are able to engage in certain types of love apart from belief in God, but the love of charity receives its very definition by placing one's love for God first. However, the spiritual nature of charity does not preclude the significance of the other natural loves. Lewis mentions that natural affections have the potential to be "preparatory imitations" or "training" (24). Thus, in a

certain sense, natural affection acts as a kind of starting point on the road to charity. The love of charity functions as an example of how the virtues of Christianity operate from within the *Tao* to advance principles within the same spirit of the *Tao*. Although charity has a spiritual origin it still belongs within the same family of virtues that all humanity recognizes as extensions of the *Tao*. Likewise, faith and hope, in the Christian sense, receive their definitions from within a particular narrative.

However, in *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis argues that there are general virtues that are common to all humanity, and a belief in the objectivity of values in the *Tao* remains essential for providing the motivation for virtuous action of this sort. In *Mere Christianity*, Lewis provides a list of these general virtues that are common to all humanity; he calls these the cardinal virtues “PRUDENCE, TEMPERANCE, JUSTICE and FORTITUDE” (76). In the appendix to *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis uses the writings of diverse premodern cultures to illustrate the widespread agreement they have in regard to objective value, which forms a shared ground for the motivation to act virtuously. Because these general virtues are widely held, it follows that morality cannot be the thing that makes Christianity different from other traditional ethical perspectives. As Lewis states,

The first thing to get clear about Christian morality between man and man is that in this department Christ did not come to preach any brand new morality. The Golden Rule of the New Testament (Do as you would be done by) is a summing up of what every one, at bottom, had always known to be right. (*Mere Christianity* 82)

Lewis understands that virtue ethics do not belong, nor have they ever belonged, solely to Christians. As mentioned above, Aristotelian virtue ethics serves as a prime example. Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* represents a different standard and motive for virtue than that in the Christian era, but many of the principles are congenial to Christianity. For Aristotle, the *polis* shapes the standard of virtue ethics and serves as the origin for motivation to perform such virtues.

Lewis recognizes the basic compatibility of Aristotelian virtue ethics with the account of New Testament virtue ethics. However, by distinguishing natural virtue from Christian virtue in *Mere Christianity*, Lewis suggests that one can achieve the former within the province of human effort, but only attains the latter through divine grace. Since Aristotle precedes the redemptive work of Christ, Lewis praises the pagans for following the best ethical code available to them. Lewis equates this innate ethical code of the *Tao* with the natural law. The idea of natural law receives biblical support from St. Paul in the book of Romans:

For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them. (*English Standard Version*, Rom. 2.14-15)

Due to their reliance upon Christian first principles, both Augustine and Lewis accept the idea of natural law as true. However, explaining how natural law operates in practice raises issues that both wrestle with. For Augustine, one must first consider the idea of the *saeculum*, or that sphere of temporal reality after the redemption where both the City of

God and City of Man intermingle. Augustine views man, by way of his essential nature of the soul, as an eternal being created in the image of God. And the soul, for Augustine, is “a special substance, endowed with reason, adapted to rule the body” (*Greatness of the Soul* 13). When God first creates man he calls him “very good,” but with the entrance of sin the moral disposition of humanity changes. Like Lewis, Augustine understands that original sin, the introduction of sin into human existence, alters man’s will and desires. For Augustine, vice originates in the will, not in actions. The actions that are often associated with vice are merely outward signs of one’s sinful will.

Because they both align with the biblical first principles of the Christian tradition, Augustine and Lewis think of vice in terms of one’s motivation for action, and this motivation stems from one’s loves. According to Augustine action occurs in accordance with what we love most, and once again this becomes a question of the will. Since original sin alters the human disposition to will virtue, it leaves disordered love in its place. In order to be truly virtuous Augustine believes the will must be regenerated through salvation, and this cannot happen through mere education. Just as the will influences action, it also effects one’s emotions. As Augustine claims,

For if the will is perverse [wrongly directed], the emotions will be perverse; but if it is righteous, the emotions will be not only blameless, but praiseworthy. The will is engaged in all of them; indeed, they are all no more than acts of will. (*City of God* XIV.6)

For Augustine, vice has no existence in the temperament, nor does it have any existence for that matter, for he defines vice as a lack of virtue. Like actions, a person’s temperament indicates the overall posture of a will that actively chooses ordinate or

inordinate love. Although Augustine places an emphasis on the interiority of the will, he does not deny the integrity between the will and action. Similarly, Lewis understands that when it comes to virtue, performing particular virtuous actions differs from being a virtuous person. He describes this by using the virtue of temperance as an example:

There is a difference between doing some particular just or temperate action and being a just or temperate man . . . a man who perseveres in doing just actions gets in the end a certain quality of character. Now it is that quality rather than the particular actions which we mean when we talk of a 'virtue'. (*Mere Christianity* 80)

Lewis understands that the will matters most when it comes to virtuous behavior.

Although Christians position their will in ways that distinguish them from Aristotle, both conceive of and practice virtue in ways that consider the *why* much more than the *what*.

The fundamental reason *why* one seeks virtue in virtually all premodern oral societies appears remarkably similar; the virtues are performed because society conceives of them as the good life. Thus, like representatives of the premodern rhetorical tradition before him, Lewis sees that motivation for practicing the cardinal virtues, regardless of faith perspective, is possible through a shared belief in objective value.

3.5 OBJECTIVE VALUE

In making a case for objective value Lewis starts from lived experience to describe the way the human life-world actually works. Lewis finds it evident that human beings do tend to agree on certain classifications of behavior in practice, but not necessarily when theorizing. Lewis relies heavily upon sources from the premodern

rhetorical tradition to make this argument. In point of fact, in the appendix to *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis cites Cicero on ten separate occasions—alongside a diverse range of similar ethical extracts from primarily oral cultures—to support the claim that premoderns are in general agreement when it comes to the doctrine of objective value. The range of objective values that Lewis lists as common across time and space for premodern societies include: The Law of General Beneficence; The Law of Special Beneficence; Duties to Parents, Elders, Ancestors; Duties to Children and Posterity; The Law of Justice; The Law of Good Faith and Veracity; The Law of Mercy; and The Law of Magnanimity (84-98). Lewis indicates that these common values, which he calls the *Tao*, represent an objective order in the realm of human affairs that provides the motivation to engage in the virtuous types of behavior required. When the required virtues are not performed these common values produce guilt. For Lewis, the *Tao* functions as the objective order that characterizes general agreement on virtuous and vicious behavior, and, simultaneously, it demands that this behavior be performed.

According to Lewis, that which one values and loves will influence both their judgment and behavior. In many ways, that which one considers a value exists because of a prior judgment, or more adequately, a prejudgment. Even though the *Tao* consists of prejudgments that are often unreflective, it illustrates an element of human consciousness that serves as the ground of action. The premodern prejudgments of the *Tao* are not irrational; they are pre-rational. The prejudgments of the *Tao* do not oppose or run contrary to reason; instead, Lewis considers them the very ground of reason. Labeling exactly how the unreflective prejudgments of the *Tao* operate as the ground of action for premodern society remains difficult, but to think that the human mind should be able to

readily structure or neatly classify the influences that go into behavior depicts a modern fallacy. To think of decision making in terms that are exclusively rational and reflective violates the significant role of prejudgment as both pre-rational and unreflective. This modern fallacy grounds knowledge in a visual analogue as opposed to an oral/aural one. According to Walter Ong,

[W]hen knowledge is likened to sight it becomes pretty exclusively a matter of explanation or explication . . . [t]o say that knowing means being able to explain impoverishes knowing. Explanation is invaluable, but any mere explanation or explication is pretty thin stuff compared either with actuality or with understanding. (*Interfaces* 122-23)

The visual analogue of knowledge shows itself to be the *modus operandi* of our world today and often directly opposes the oral/aural frame. The premodern rhetorical tradition that originates in oral societies develops along an oral/aural analogue of knowledge, knowledge that retains the common values that inhabit the *sensus communis* of the *Tao*. A modern attempt to explain the origin and moral restraints of the *Tao* follows a visual analogue of knowledge. Since the objective values of the *Tao* “can give no ‘reason’ for themselves” (*Abolition* 40), they are not considered knowledge in a visual analogue that by necessity requires rational explanation.

Lewis recognizes that all values must first be accepted uncritically before one can see the rationality of their existence. In the appendix to *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis claims that the *Tao*’s “validity cannot be deduced. For those who do not perceive its rationality, even universal consent could not prove it” (83). Meanwhile, one exhibits inconsistency when they accept the validity of some values in the *Tao* while criticizing

others: “if what he retains is valid, what he rejects is equally valid too” (41). Lewis finds it impossible to have a legitimate system of values that does not accept the content of the *Tao*, because the *Tao* functions as “the sole source of all value judgements. If it is rejected, all value is rejected. If any value is retained, it is retained” (43). For Lewis, having a posture of doubt toward the values of the *Tao* presents intellectual and moral problems. If the values of the *Tao* are under scrutiny then actions cannot ensue from them. Action becomes encumbered when one has to stop and analyze the value from which it stems. Lewis suggests that to “postpone obedience to a precept until its credentials have been examined” portrays an absurdity (49). Of course this cannot actually happen in the moment of action; it arises as a theoretical possibility only. Lewis sees that inaction ensues from such a philosophy that systematically scrutinizes objective value. When it comes to the practical contexts where action (or inaction) must occur in a timely manner, the moment depends not upon reason but habit. For Lewis, those trained by the *Tao* are still acting reasonably, but one’s reasoning capacity does not offer the motive, which only comes from “emotions organized by trained habit into stable sentiments” (25).

At this juncture it seems important to provide some initial specification regarding Lewis’s view of reason as it unfolds in *The Abolition of Man*. Elsewhere Lewis displays his awareness that our age lacks general agreement on how reason functions in questions related to moral behavior. In *The Discarded Image*, Lewis announces the starting point for this lack of agreement: “The eighteenth century witnessed a revolt against the doctrine that moral judgements are wholly, or primarily, or at all, rational” (159). According to Lewis, eighteenth-century philosophers begin the process of “narrow[ing]

the meaning of the word *reason*. From meaning (in all but the most philosophical contexts) the whole Rational Soul, both *intellectus* and *ratio*, it shrank to meaning merely ‘the power by which man deduces one proposition from another’” (159-60). With this shrinking of reason comes the idea that one’s moral duty no longer involves the intellect, it becomes merely sentimental. While virtue was once considered reasonable, Lewis believes that eighteenth-century philosophy, or the Age of Enlightenment, removes it from discussions of reason and knowledge itself.

In *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis argues for a type of reason that functions practically and thus quite differently than the modern view of reason, which presently reigns as a result of the Enlightenment. As a starting point for understanding Lewis’s idea of reason I find it helpful to consider it in relation to Calvin Schrag’s expanded notion of reason and Walter Fisher’s narrative rationality. Schrag spells out his expanded notion of reason in *Radical Reflection and the Origin of the Human Sciences*. Schrag explains that the Enlightenment begins a process that essentially scientizes reason and places tradition “outside the domain of the rational,” since “reason was to recognize no authority but itself” (113). Because of this, like Lewis, Schrag understands that Enlightenment philosophy misguides and reduces rationality when it fails to remember the phenomenological origins of reason. When thought of in this way reason appears through lived experience as an origivative and “performative process within the prephilosophical and prescientific praxis of everyday life . . . as much the work of the community as it is of any particular self, bearing the inscription of social memories and marking out future anticipations” (105). For Lewis and Schrag alike, reason exists

practically and as an originative phenomenological aspect of human being that depends upon context.

Thus, reason functions as a type of foresight, a given in human affairs. Oral societies shaped by the ideals of premodern rhetorical tradition depend upon this givenness of reason for the practical decision making that requires shared values and concepts of virtue. The Enlightenment abstracts reason from virtuous action, but in *Human Communication as Narration*, Fisher's "narrative rationality" argues that rationality cannot be divorced from social practices. Like Lewis, Fisher sees the incoherence involved in conceptions of reason that make it an inherent faculty of the mind outside of the practices which invoke it. In order for something to be considered reasonable it necessitates human interaction; thus, one assesses and performs rationality as a result of discourse. In line with Lewis's rhetoric and philosophy of education, this means that actions such as virtuous behavior are by necessity within the province of reason.

For Lewis, the *Tao* represents the premodern measure by which reason and virtuous actions are to be judged against. When we again assess Aristotelian virtue ethics against the backdrop of the New Testament we remember that while Christian ethics certainly makes advancements, Christ and the apostles never teach a new morality. In the essay "On Ethics," Lewis claims, the idea "that Christianity brought a new ethical code into the world is a grave error. If it had done so, then we should have to conclude that all who first preached it wholly misunderstood their own message" (46). Lewis articulates his conviction that the gospel message and call to repentance would have been absurd to pagans if it were not offered with the shared presupposition that a moral law exists and

produces a guilt that demands payment for transgressing it. As we have seen, Christianity presupposes the pagan belief in objective value. This issue gets to one of Lewis's central arguments in *The Abolition of Man*, the idea that lived experience tells us there has to be some innate neutral standard that human beings share when assessing value.

Lewis believes the world has an order that accords to an objective standard of value. In his article "The Poison of Subjectivism," Lewis asserts, "Until modern times no thinker of the first rank ever doubted that our judgements of value were rational judgements or that what they discovered was objective" (73). Lewis recognizes that before modernity values were accepted and received as inherent to the fabric of existence. Because of this he rejects the popular modern view, describing it as "the fatal superstition that men can create values" (73). For Lewis, if we are to have any values at all, it follows that there needs to be something beyond subjective taste. Lewis explains that objective value plays a similar role within all premodern societies, including those that do not share his faith perspective. A shared conception of objective value does not present a tension for Lewis's theological position because he applies natural law awareness to pagans: "the general tenor of scripture does not encourage us to believe that our knowledge of the Law has been depraved in the same degree as our power to fulfil it" (79). In sum, the Christian conception of original sin by no means pictures humanity as *unaware* of the natural law, just *unable* to meet its requirements. Lewis continues, "Our righteousness may be filthy and ragged; but Christianity gives us no ground for holding that our perceptions of right are in the same condition" (79).

So far we see that Lewis, like many educators operating within the premodern rhetorical tradition, sympathizes with general aspects of the philosophical tradition as long as it maintains a certain balance. Lewis recognizes that a degree of criticism might be necessary as contradictions arise within communal considerations of objective value. But Lewis views this process of criticism as occurring through dialogue, not monologue. The kind of criticism that Lewis rejects represents modern education; it professes to approach objective value from the outside, an approach that presupposes from the outset that objective value has no claim on it. Lewis permits the validity of criticism that works from within the constraints of objective value, because it presupposes the existence of the *Tao* and does not criticize just to criticize. For Lewis, criticizing the *Tao* only has legitimacy when performed within the spirit of the *Tao*, for the *Tao* “admits development from within” (45). The first type of criticism deconstructs whereas the second one constructs: “It is the difference between alteration from within and alteration from without: between the organic and the surgical” (45). Lewis identifies that one’s motivation matters when engaging in the practice of “critical thinking,” particularly when thinking critically about the *Tao*.

Lewis connects the modern form of moral criticism with the thought of Nietzsche. Like MacIntyre, Lewis sees that the outright rejection of all inherited moral values remains a very real position, and unless the classical tradition can be vindicated, the Nietzschean ethic remains plausible. Ultimately, Lewis and MacIntyre believe the Nietzschean ethic to be misguided, for according to Lewis it “can be accepted only if we are ready to scrap traditional morals as a mere error and then to put ourselves in a position where we can find no ground for any value judgements at all” (*Abolition* 46). In

After Virtue, MacIntyre argues that we only have two legitimate choices in how to respond to the moral realm in our historical moment, either from Aristotle and the classical tradition, or Nietzsche and the rejection of all values. But why and how was the Aristotelian account ever discredited? As MacIntyre states,

[E]ver since belief in Aristotelian teleology was discredited moral philosophers have attempted to provide some alternative rational secular account of the nature and status of morality, but that all these attempts, various and variously impressive as they have been, have in fact failed, a failure perceived most clearly by Nietzsche. (256)

Lewis sees that the shared belief in objective value aligns premodern accounts of virtue, but when traditional morality gets rejected the modern framework leaves no alternative but that which Nietzsche prescribes. For Lewis, a world where the only authentic recourse for humanity comes through rejecting the concept of value altogether spells the abolition of man. Nietzsche correctly exposes the false world created by modernity, but instead of exposing the false world in order to return to the classical world of virtue that represents the premodern rhetorical tradition, he gets rid of all virtue. Both Lewis and MacIntyre recognize that we have discarded traditional morality unjustifiably, but if we do not return to the classical framework of value that modernity has replaced, the Nietzschean ethic represents the only legitimate response.

3.6 *SENSUS COMMUNIS* AND NATURAL LAW

In *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis includes the writings of Plato and Aristotle alongside Cicero and Augustine as illustrations of scholars who actively presuppose the

natural law. In many ways this general premodern belief in natural law helps to restrain the ideal of endless speculation and keeps it from fully controlling the educational milieu. The ideal of the philosophical tradition tends to undermine objective value, but, ironically, the premodern philosophers largely believe in the reality of the natural law. For them, pursuing knowledge for its own sake was never intended to deliberately eliminate natural law; rather, the ideal was meant to extend and increase our understanding of natural law. Lewis accepts and appreciates this approach whenever it remains restrained by tradition, for he knows “Those who understand the spirit of the *Tao* and who have been led by that spirit can modify it in directions which the spirit itself demands” (47). Since the premodern philosophers believe the endless pursuit of knowledge has real value alongside the other values of the natural law, they cannot foresee that it will eventually undercut natural law.

Lewis understands that premodern education, from both the rhetorical and philosophical traditions, believes in the objective reality of the natural law as “the sole source of all value judgements” (43). For Lewis, any concept of value derives from natural law, a conception that premodern societies held as self-evident. The doctrine of objective value, or the natural law, exhibits a conception of reality that has been held by various traditional societies before and apart from allegiance to the Christian faith. Lewis does not believe that there needs to be any connection between accountability to this moral law and faith in the God of Christianity. It remains possible for one to believe they must give, out of perceived necessity, allegiance to the law without picturing this as the *same* allegiance one must give to God. This represents another key element in the tension surrounding one’s duty to the natural law, and Lewis gets to the heart of it by

asking if the directives of the natural law are “right because God commands them or does God command them because they are right?” (“Poison” 79). Lewis eliminates both viewpoints and posits, “God neither *obeys* nor *creates* the moral law” (80). Lewis considers this a problem that results from our temporal and finite categories of thought, and through Trinitarian imagery readdresses the natural law as something begotten, not created by God. Thus, in the end the supernatural origin of the natural law cannot be avoided, but Lewis never tries to avoid it. In *Mere Christianity*, Lewis claims outright that humanity’s innate sense of natural law indicates a reality of the supernatural realm. In *The Abolition of Man*, however, Lewis’s argument for the natural law refuses covert proselytization. Lewis states his bias directly: “though I myself am a Theist, and indeed a Christian, I am not here attempting any indirect argument for Theism. . . . Whether this position implies a supernatural origin for the *Tao* is a question I am not here concerned with” (49). Again, Lewis knows that the supernatural origin of the *Tao* cannot be proven according to speculative reason or scientific method, for it stands as a position that one must first believe to understand.

The synthesis of Lewis’s Christian faith and intellectual awareness permits him to accept the truth of the natural law. However, Lewis recognizes that both the origin and reality of the natural law are issues that create considerable points of contention for modern skeptics. The very fact that Lewis states his bias so candidly in *The Abolition of Man* suggests that his familiarity with these disputes causes him to explicitly avoid any hints of proselytization. Lewis certainly understands that if the natural law exists as objectively real, then it exists as objectively real for everyone regardless of one’s faith commitments or lack thereof. Because Lewis argues that the natural law functions

through the first principles of practical reason, some questions still remain. For example, how does one come to know the natural law? Are the values of natural law inborn or learned? Does natural law mean that only one correct ethical code exists regardless of one's locale and historical moment? In order to answer these questions we must take a closer look at how Lewis's *Tao* corresponds to the rhetorical principle of *sensus communis*.

As stated in the previous chapter, one of the most comprehensive treatments of *sensus communis* comes from Giambattista Vico in response to the Cartesian *bons sens* (good sense). Vico, like Lewis, displays an acute awareness of how, once handled by Descartes, the concept of *sensus communis* experiences a fundamental shift in meaning. Lewis sees that this shift permits "a growing tendency to assign moral premises to some faculty other than reason, so that reason (or sense) is now concerned only with truth, not also with good" (*Studies* 153). However, Ramist dialectic makes the thought of Descartes possible. Peter Ramus minimizes *sensus communis* by taking elements from the canon of rhetoric and placing them under dialectic, thus making *invention*, the discovery of arguments, a logical process with sequential progression. As a result of the insight gained through his rhetorical milieu, Vico overcomes Ramist dialectic by describing the way that argumentation actually occurs in public performance. Oftentimes, rhetorical performance functions spontaneously as *extempore*. The premodern rhetorical tradition teaches that public performance consistently requires the orator to draw upon components in the canon simultaneously and without advance preparation. Unrehearsed public performance depicts a moment where content and style

blend seamlessly; thus, rhetorical practice in the form of *extempore* works against the logical and sequential nature of Ramist dialectic, as well as Cartesian method.

Vico understands that in operation Cartesian method has destructive tendencies for rhetorical education. It excludes the role of probability in favor of certainty by employing a posture of systematic doubt. *Sensus communis* cannot be proven under the scrutiny of logical certainty; rather, as Vico states, “common sense arises from perceptions based on similitude. Probabilities stand, so to speak, midway between truth and falsity, since things which most of the time are true, are only very seldom false” (*Study Methods* III). By stating that probabilities reside “between truth and falsity” Vico affirms that some truths are certain while others are probable. By holding this position on truth Vico follows in the same Augustinian tradition where this project puts Lewis. This position on truth places each of these thinkers into a camp that obliterates the simplistic either/or binary of objectivism and relativism. Lewis’s Augustinian position on truth believes in objective value while still recognizing that the local *nomos*, or the customs and habits, of morality are relatively different in certain times and places. Even though Lewis dispenses with thinking that supports one particular moral code, this does not reduce the Augustinian position to mere relativism. On the contrary, the *Tao* exists as the objective order of value by which motivations and moral actions are to be judged. This reality allows for an objective range of reasonable moral responses that rests within the socially determined *sensus communis*. Across premodern societies this range of moral responses looks strikingly similar.

As we have seen, Lewis describes any attempt to prove the existence of an objective order of value as futile. Lewis sees that in spite of not having proof, the

premodern consciousness consistently demonstrates a belief in an objective order of value. In the appendix to *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis provides a roster of pagan sources, including thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero, whose recorded thoughts support the doctrine of objective value. From a Christian perspective, objective value, or natural law, makes sense for Lewis, but we have not yet ascertained how it makes sense to the pagans. Vico again helps us to understand how this works as he distinguishes natural law, *jus gentium* or the “natural law of the gentes,” from God’s revealed law in the Judeo-Christian tradition. By following John D. Schaeffer’s interpretation we see that for Vico, pagan “universal law is established by custom and . . . emerges from the conditions of primordial existence, which elicit similar responses from all societies” (*Sensus Communis* 82). Hence, natural law comes into view neither as an individual possession nor innate faculty of one’s individual reason. Rather, we witness the objective reality of natural law as it surfaces through a consistent range of reasonable responses that societies construct in order to face universal problems encountered out of communal necessity. Vico and Lewis understand that these reasonable responses are consistently within the same objective range of possibilities.

By using a diverse list of premodern thinkers from rhetorical, philosophical, and distinctly religious traditions to defend his argument, Lewis employs an open-system awareness characteristic of scholars working within the premodern rhetorical tradition. Lewis’s belief that all human beings are created with similar attributes in the image of the same God (*imago Dei*) permits him to acknowledge the reality of the natural law, or the doctrine of objective value, as something common to all humanity. Further, *imago Dei* allows Lewis to think of humanity as possessing common originative faculties of

knowing. Like Augustine, Lewis thinks regular people, both Christian and pagan, are able to find wisdom due to their common lineage. This serves as the ground of the Augustinian rhetorical principle, which Lewis adopts, that since all truth is God's truth it therefore exists non-contradictorily. In sum, because all truth is God's truth for Lewis, he maintains a humble, open-system approach toward all forms of knowledge while rejecting systems that claim to account for everything. However, the premodern pagans, whom Lewis cites, from Aristotle to Cicero, believe in the objectivity of value not for religious reasons but for practical, common sense reasons.

Natural law actively operates in the decision making process of the community through the byproduct of *sensus communis*. Accordingly, Schaeffer claims that for Vico, "*sensus communis* is a criterion taught to the nations by divine providence to enable them to 'certify' those customs and laws found in every community" (84). Many contemporary scholars unsurprisingly reject the notion of natural law because it implies a metaphysical origin, but Vico thinks of it as indispensable. For Vico, divine providence gives the very criterion (*sensus communis*) by which the community reflects upon the values of natural law. In the parlance of modern education, natural law carries connotations of rigidity and oppressiveness, but Vico and Lewis do not conceive of it as such. On the contrary, both agree that "our ideas of the good may change, but they cannot change either for the better or the worse if there is no absolute and immutable good to which they can approximate or from which they can recede" (Lewis, "Poison" 76). With this in mind, how do we make rhetorical sense out of Lewis's *Tao* as it interacts with our discussion of natural law and Vico's account of *sensus communis*?

3.7 PRACTICAL REASON (*PHRONĒSIS*)

The common link between the *Tao*, natural law, and *sensus communis* becomes richer when we look more closely at how Lewis understands practical reason (*phronēsis*). In *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis equates the first principles of practical reason with natural law:

This thing which I have called for convenience the Tao, and which others may call Natural Law or Traditional Morality or the First Principles of Practical Reason or the First Platitudes, is not one among a series of possible systems of value. It is the sole source of all value judgements.

(43)

The renewed emphasis upon the topic of practical reason in contemporary moral philosophy owes much to the apparent failures of Enlightenment philosophy. Practical reason survives and flourishes today as a result of its deep roots in the premodern rhetorical tradition. Practical reason brings the province of knowledge back into the fold of tradition and communal interaction, whereas theoretical reason views knowledge as individual attainment. Practical reason serves as one of the most crucial elements for us to think alongside Lewis and to see how he implicitly operates within the premodern rhetorical tradition.

Beginning in Ancient Greece, the concept of practical reason (*phronēsis*) receives various interpretations throughout history. In Book 6 of *Nicomachean Ethics*, which Lewis cites, Aristotle distinguishes between *sophia* and *phronēsis*. In *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis's concept of practical reason adopts certain aspects of Aristotle's notion of *phronēsis* that tend to align with the principles of the premodern rhetorical tradition.

When Lewis states “an open mind about the ultimate foundations either of Theoretical or of Practical Reason is idiocy” (*Abolition* 48), he consciously employs the Aristotelian distinction between *sophia* and *phronēsis*. In *Truth and Method*, Hans Gadamer attests to the abundance of definitions that *phronēsis* affords the English language. In one place he defines it as “practical knowledge” (19), in another as “moral knowledge” (312), and yet another as “practical acuteness or wisdom” (560). Similarly, Steven Mailloux notes the various ways there are to define the Greek term *phronēsis*, such as prudence, practical reason, or practical wisdom (“Rhetorical” 457). Defining *phronēsis* as practical reason offers an advantage because it draws attention to its inherent rhetorical function, for reason cannot be *practical* without action, and the inducement to action belongs within the province of rhetoric. Practical reason operates rhetorically by showing that standards of knowledge and truth have no practical significance without public assent. This directly opposes the “Platonic rhetorical heresy,” which advances the false belief that the *materia* of truth exists apart from *forma* (Murphy, *Middle Ages* 60). Practical reason allows us to realize the necessity of rhetoric in arguing for, defending, clarifying, and enacting truth.

Since Lewis argues for educational practices grounded in practical reason (*phronēsis*), his position advances the ideals of the premodern rhetorical tradition. Nowhere in *The Abolition of Man* or in any of his other writings does Lewis use the term *phronēsis*, but his version of practical reason gives clues that help one understand how and where the concept fits within his rhetoric and philosophy of education. Lewis’s use of practical reason in *The Abolition of Man* parallels the Aristotelian distinction of *phronēsis*. Like Aristotle, Lewis thinks of practical reason as a distinct intellectual virtue

whereby one learns the first principles of ethics. However, because he emphasizes the creative capacity of *phronēsis*, Lewis very much resembles the Isocratean version of practical reason, which predates Aristotle. Takis Poulakos suggests that Isocrates and Aristotle offer complementary, but slightly different, accounts of their conception of *phronēsis* as it operates in practice. Isocrates “uses the notion of *phronēsis* to convey the spirit of . . . judgments,” and deemphasizes what Aristotle makes foremost, “the specific cases of . . . decision” (“Isocrates” 74). That is not to say that past decisions are unimportant for Isocrates, but the form of practical reason as a creative faculty for making future decisions maintains equal, and in some cases superior, placement with respect to the past content of societal deliberations. By focusing upon the dynamic nature of the intellectual virtue *phronēsis*, Lewis exhibits sensibilities that align with the active educational ideals of the premodern rhetorical tradition that begins with Isocrates. Like Lewis, the premodern rhetorical tradition highlights the importance of an education that enacts practical reason through the unity of theory and action.

However, Lewis still uses Aristotle’s distinct categories of theoretical and practical reason when he discusses the necessity of adhering to the reasonableness of the *Tao* before one can morally advance within its own parameters. The *Tao* represents the objective values that cannot be proven theoretically but are nevertheless true. Lewis sees that the good person validates their existence by doing them, and by doing them continually he or she learns where and how they ought to be applied in particular situations. In *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis espouses Aristotelian virtue ethics to show the substantial ethical agreement that premodern societies display when it comes to the idea and form of things like objective value, moral education, and virtuous behavior. In his

essay “On Ethics,” Lewis explains further why traditional morality cannot be discounted simply because it cannot be proven theoretically, for the reason that “wherever and whenever ethical discussion begins we find already before us an ethical code whose validity has to be assumed before we can even criticize it” (55). Although Lewis thinks of this in terms of natural law, he once again carefully delineates this concept as open and flexible when compared to previous versions. Lewis asserts, “You will not suspect me of trying to reintroduce in its full Stoical or medieval rigour the doctrine of Natural Law” (55).

The function of practical reason, or *phronēsis*, as Lewis portrays it throughout *The Abolition of Man*, gives a collective picture of the reality of objective value across history. Lewis identifies practical reason as the common faculty that enables human beings from all different faith perspectives to understand and engage in ethical communication. Lewis thinks that modern notions of the good life and virtuous behavior are confused because of their reliance upon theoretical reason as opposed to practical reason. Modern education teaches people to rely upon theoretical reason in all areas of knowledge, including moral, but Lewis understands that throughout history communities have enacted ethical knowledge through practical reason. The preservation of practical reason up until now, even in its present marginal role, owes much to the educational ideals of the premodern rhetorical tradition. As Lewis suggests throughout *The Abolition of Man*, modern education follows the path of theoretical reason to the exclusion of practical reason (*phronēsis*). By excluding the necessity of practical reason, modern education greatly divides itself from traditional learning and produces, Lewis exclaims, “men without chests” (25).

3.8 MODERN EDUCATION AND SCIENTISM

Modern education makes value and ethical inquiry of merely theoretical concern, and, as a result, virtually abolishes the practical necessity of moral education. Lewis argues against modern education due to its tendency to produce speculative mindsets in the realm of ethics. Lewis sees that modern education has false philosophical underpinnings that undermine the premodern belief in objective value. Modern education rejects the definition of human essence as one which is constrained and received through human tradition, and posits in its place the idea that individuals are self-made. This philosophy adheres to the notion that modern science and modern technology have the capacity to solve all human problems, including those of a moral and spiritual nature. In order to justify itself modern technology needs to perpetually spawn new technologies, and the novelty of these new technologies simultaneously distracts us so that we do not reflect upon the things it takes away. The distractions of modern technology make any potential contrition that might have otherwise accompanied the abandonment of traditional human value less likely.

According to Lewis, the unreflective proliferation of modern technology ensues from a worldview he names *scientism*. In “A Reply to Professor Haldane,” Lewis defines scientism as

A certain outlook on the world which is casually connected with the popularization of the sciences, though it is much less common among real scientists than among their readers. It is, in a word, the belief that the supreme moral end is the perpetuation of our own

species, and that this is to be pursued even if, in the process of being fitted for survival, our species has to be stripped of all those things for which we value it—of pity, of happiness, and of freedom. I am not sure you will find this belief formally asserted by any writer: such things creep in as assumed, and unstated, major premises. (76-77)

The reply seeks to clarify Haldane's misinterpretation of themes that Lewis constructs in his fiction and nonfiction works—the former being *That Hideous Strength* and the latter being *The Abolition of Man*. Lewis makes it clear that his writings do not criticize real science or scientists; rather, they criticize scientism. Lewis's definition of scientism provides invaluable insight into his rhetoric and philosophy of education and offers readers of *The Abolition of Man* a hermeneutical entrance point by which to interpret the underlying problems that he identifies with modern education.

Lewis's definition discloses the fact that scientism operates primarily as an unreflective belief. On the very first page of *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis describes how harmful ideas are often transmitted unintentionally. In this case, Lewis depicts the authors of an elementary textbook, *The Green Book*, as “doing the best they knew,” and he does not think they “intended any harm” (1). However, this does not prevent Lewis from evaluating some potential consequences of the ideas being dispersed through this book written for an audience of schoolchildren. Lewis states, “I am not concerned with what they desired but with the effect their book will certainly have on the schoolboy's mind” (4-5). Like this project, Michael Aeschliman acknowledges that Lewis understands, “With the growth of scientism has come a massive increase in the powers of

technology and applied science to change and manipulate not only the physical landscape but the mental and human landscape too” (*Restitution* 78). Ideas in general, and scientism in particular, perpetuate a certain outlook of the world that renders intentions irrelevant and implications imperative.

Scientism produces unreflective language and ideas that we disseminate and use to educate our children. The textbook authors whom Lewis evaluates are unreflectively assigning value judgments of great importance that will be applied to fields outside their area of authority. The problem arises, Lewis claims, when the young schoolchild begins doing his or her homework not realizing in the meantime that “ethics, theology, and politics are all at stake” (*Abolition* 5). *The Green Book* authors disseminate the worldview of scientism quite unreflectively and the schoolchildren receive it in just the same way. The benefits of scientism are enticing; it offers easy, one-size-fits-all arguments; groups all forms of knowledge under its umbrella; and invites autonomous human reasoning. Lewis picks up on this and notices the inevitable outcome that such ideas will surely have upon the mind of a child. The power of the authors lays in the great certainty with which they conduct their work. Human traditions are not even argued; instead, they are belittled without justification and effortlessly set aside. The people of the past, with all of their virtues and principles, are looked down upon as simplistic because they believe in objective value and lack the knowledge of modern science.

Lewis makes it clear that scientism is not neutral; its very survival depends upon its ability to successfully engulf rival traditions, values, and faith perspectives. Scientism perpetuates the belief that experts can engage in a rational ordering of human life and

affairs by using the technical knowledge obtained through modern science. Through technique and autonomous method scientism masters the modern human consciousness. In *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis describes the inevitable process of dehumanization that follows from a society that debunks traditional values and places new ideologies in its stead—ideologies that have arisen through modern science and technology. Lewis recognizes the capabilities of scientism to assimilate itself into the common vernacular:

The belief that we can invent ‘ideologies’ at pleasure, and the consequent treatment of mankind as mere υλη, specimens, preparations, begins to affect our very language. . . . Virtue has become *integration* and diligence *dynamism* . . . the virtues of thrift and temperance, and even of ordinary intelligence, are *sales-resistance*. (74)

Through the supposed success of human acquiescence to modern technological values such as standardization, efficiency and progress, scientism infiltrates language and systematically ignores virtue.

Although Lewis stands as a Christian Theist, he insists that what he defends throughout *The Abolition of Man* matters for all humanity. Scientism does not depreciate one particular faith perspective—it depreciates them all. The pretensions of scientism cannot survive amidst traditional virtue and objective value. It does, however, require cold objectivity when beneficial for its own purposes and values. The propaganda of scientism wants individuals to believe there are new values to be discovered which will be better and more reliable than those inherited from past generations. Lewis finds it absurd to believe that we might uncover new values through scientific technique once we

have set aside the values of past generations. Lewis spends the entire second chapter explaining the philosophical error behind the belief that new values can be discovered, for each of scientism's new values requires the old values in some capacity. Lewis only gives us two logical possibilities: either the objective values of the *Tao* exist across all human belief systems or values do not exist whatsoever. The latter of these, Lewis claims, will bring about man's abolition, for we receive the definition of a human being through the passing on of tradition. Premodern human tradition claims that there are certain virtuous practices and habits that make human beings what they are. He or she who steps outside the *Tao* steps outside what it means to be a human being. By creating men without chests, Lewis issues the following verdict on modern education: "The practical result of education in the spirit of *The Green Book* must be the destruction of the society which accepts it" (27). The duplicity of scientism does not reveal that the human embodiment of technological value in the place of traditional value announces the emergence of "the world of post-humanity" (75).

Whether or not the harmful elements of modern education are disseminated deliberately, Lewis understands that the method of debunking or altogether ignoring traditional values and virtues illustrates the default position for modern education. Lewis uses scholars like Augustine, Aristotle, and Plato to make the point that representatives of premodern education agree that children need to be taught those things that are reasonable before they are able to reason. Implicitly aligning with the premodern rhetorical tradition, Lewis argues,

[T]he educational problem is wholly different according as you stand within or without the *Tao*. For those within, the task is to train in the pupil

those responses which are in themselves appropriate, whether anyone is making them or not, and in making which the very nature of man consists.

(20)

Lewis believes that the virtues stem from correct attitudes that one learns from their teachers and tradition, attitudes that translate into correct actions. After excluding objective value from the outset the following problem still confronts modern education: should sentiments be removed altogether, or should it still “encourage some sentiments for reasons that have nothing to do with their intrinsic ‘justness’ or ‘ordinacy’” (21)? In either case Lewis doubts the decision will be based upon benevolent motives, for the value of benevolence rests in the objectivity of the *Tao*, which modern education rejects.

3.9 CONCLUSION

As a worldview, scientism finds asylum in the unreflective recesses of the human mind, and becomes disseminated through unreflective human speech. The ideas of man have rhetorical implications apart from any necessary intention on behalf of the person who perpetuates and believes these ideas. The concern that Lewis has with the scientism of modern education centers chiefly on the popular assumption that it belongs in areas of human existence where it has no legitimate sanction. Scientism persists as a worldview outside the realm of ethical and rhetorical practice; it brushes aside areas of human tradition without acknowledgment and without justification. Scientism does not challenge Old World values; it simply pays them no attention. Lewis detects that the application of scientism through a textbook affords its authors the opportunity to say, “he

who attacks them attacks Intelligence” (25). Scientism denies the schoolchild a rhetorical choice—it dictates how one should believe and behave.

Virtue and choice are consistent features of the premodern rhetorical tradition, for through this tradition the wise person persuades others as to why virtue should be chosen over vice. From Isocrates, Cicero, Quintilian, Augustine, to Vico, the educational practices of the premodern rhetorical tradition link rhetoric with virtue. Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* provides a record of scholarly insight into the interrelationship of rhetoric and virtue from the earliest of times. From the moment Aristotle first begins to theorize about rhetoric, he conceives of it as an offshoot of ethical studies. Throughout his works, Aristotle supports the idea that virtue consists of the habits and actions one learns through moral education. More recently, Richard Weaver explains that language is sermonistic. In other words, through rhetoric human beings act like preachers and have the potential to influence one another “for good or ill” (*Language* 224). In *Human Communication as Narration*, Walter Fisher describes rhetoric as intertwined within the composition of how one learns what it means to be human. Fisher thinks of *homo narrens*, or the story-telling animal, as a term more apt to describe human beings than *homo sapiens*. Each of these three scholars depicts rhetoric as having an inherent ethical function that one uses to affect the choices of others. For Aristotle, virtue can only be possible on the grounds of choice. As recorded in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle declares, “Choice seems to be very closely related to virtue and to be a more reliable criterion for judging character than actions are” (1111a.5). Virtue, then, appears as a result of good choices made through rhetorical deliberation—good choices that turn into habits of the heart when consistently made.

Rhetoric functions by creating or eliminating choices in order to persuade individuals to choose in a particular way. By rejecting traditional virtue as a viable choice, the scientism of modern education simultaneously causes the deterioration of rhetoric. Scientism eliminates certain choices by obscuring the general premodern agreement on what things mean historically and why things have been done historically. In *The Abolition of Man*, this appears as one of the major differences between old education (premodern) and new education (modern). After it becomes clear to the new educators that the hope of technological value exists only as a fantasy, education becomes “merely propaganda,” whereas the education of old was “a kind of propagation—men transmitting manhood to men” (23). Lewis knows that education once served the purpose of stewardship—training the next generation in virtue, providing a coherent worldview, and teaching respect for tradition. The new education provides plenty of choices within, but not apart from, scientism. Scientism implies that all choices related to traditional virtue are equally subjective; therefore, choice itself becomes meaningless. Through the benefits of modern science and technology, scientism appears as the answer for all of life’s woes. Scientism produces results that meet the desires that come through a belief in technological values. By “regard[ing] all ideas of what we *ought* to do simply as an interesting psychological survival” (51), scientism allows premodern faith perspectives to be present as long as they remain a matter of private personal preference that has no real impact upon societal behavior. Since the worldview of scientism functions as the central lens of modern education, it mediates how its rivals are to be interpreted. In all of this scientism sets the contemporary educational agenda and betrays its rhetorical agency by eliminating certain choices in favor of others. Because it mediates which moral choices

are allowable, scientism makes choice arbitrary whenever they are made within the parameters that it sets.

Throughout *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis implies that returning to certain aspects of premodern education might be able to get us out of the mess that modern philosophy has put us in. For Lewis, training the next generation in such a way that opposes the popular notions of modern philosophy illustrates the educational task at hand. Lewis rejects modern education's ideal of endless speculation when it comes to questions of value and truth. Lewis's rhetoric and philosophy of education exposes the fallacies inherent to the scientism of modern philosophy and denounces its methods and techniques because they replace human deliberation. Although a diverse range of contemporary scholars have discredited the philosophical underpinnings of modernity, scientism still reigns over the popular consciousness. Lewis's rhetoric and philosophy of education enters the fold by articulating those areas of modern education that need to be abandoned. Modern philosophy continues to thrive through the generally accepted notion of progress—the idea that the continual search for something more has inherent value and subsists inevitably. Lewis wonders why modernly educated people cannot accept the idea that, when it comes to the realm of values, everything to be known about them resides in the past not the future. The essential thing comes down to living in accordance with them, not more knowledge of them. Lewis presents us with an education that, in the twenty-first century, compels us to rediscover the moral learning inherent in the teachings of our ancestors, not to continually engage in the arrogant assumption that we know better.

As it stands, we remain busy trying to reach consensus on what common values might be, rather than accepting what they have always been. Lewis argues that we must realize and teach the futility of engaging in the practice of endless speculation in the area of values. Against modern views of value Lewis's rhetoric and philosophy of education shows us that sometimes the fastest way forward comes by first looking back, it reminds us that "progress means doing an about-turn and walking back to the right road; and in that case the man who turns back soonest is the most progressive man" (*Mere Christianity* 28).

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ABOLITION OF MAN:

AT THE INTERSECTION OF MEDIA ECOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The worldview of scientism, with its all-encompassing methods and techniques, guides the intellectual agenda of modern education, and its practical effect makes scientific certainty the only path to knowledge. Lewis's rhetorical awareness permits him to pinpoint the problematic effects of scientism for moral education. Lewis raises fundamental questions about the purpose of education, as well as the role that societal influence plays in defining this purpose for good and ill. The questions that Lewis pursues bring him into the premodern rhetorical tradition generally, but distinct aspects of his thought continue to resonate with scholars working within the media ecology tradition, an interdisciplinary area of study informed by rhetoric and philosophy. Contemporary scholars use the term "media ecology" to describe a particular line of inquiry that looks at the effects of media environments upon human consciousness. Media environments include "language, numbers, images, holograms, and all of the other symbols, techniques, and machinery that make us what we are" (Postman, *Humanism* 11). The emphasis that Lewis places upon scientism's influential techniques and methods brings him into the media ecology conversation. Scholars within the media ecology tradition share Lewis's belief that when method and technique supplant practical reason as a faculty of judgment, it results in the loss of human essence and freedom.

Lewis realizes that modern education's misapplication of method and technique undermines the need for moral character development, the most fundamental purpose with which education has traditionally been involved. Scientism achieves its educational agenda when society accepts method and technique as the only viable solution for solving societal problems. The political implications of scientism are not lost on Lewis, for by design scientism must be that which "plans" society over and against unpredictable human beings. Scientism inevitably produces a technocratic form of government that "base[s] its claim to plan us on its claim to knowledge. If we are to be mothered, mother must know best" (Lewis, "Progress" 314). This chapter begins by undertaking a history of media ecology in order to assess its development as a tradition of distinct inquiry. Next, this chapter argues that certain aspects of the media ecology tradition are closely aligned with, and therefore legitimately extend from, the principles of the premodern rhetorical tradition. I follow this assertion by offering different media ecological perspectives on education as further support. This chapter then looks at the concepts of scientism and technique more closely to open up *The Abolition of Man* as a meaningful rhetorical/media ecological text. The chapter ends by considering why viewing Lewis alongside media ecology inquiry not only assists in this project's overall interpretation, but also illustrates the contemporary relevance of his rhetoric and philosophy of education.

4.2 A HISTORY OF MEDIA ECOLOGY

Media ecology, an interdisciplinary tradition, uses open-system awareness to investigate specific lines of inquiry that have always existed but are not necessarily

emphasized. Neil Postman devises the term “media ecology” in 1968, but as he explains, “the first thing to be said about media ecology is that I am not inventing it. I am only naming it” (“The Reformed English Curriculum” 161). Postman gives scholars interested in inquires of media ecology an explicit focus. As he puts it, the goal of the tradition centers on studying how “media of communication affect human perception, understanding, feeling, and value; and how our interaction with media facilitates or impedes our chances of survival” (161). Although Postman introduces media ecology as an identifiable tradition, he remains indebted to the work of Marshall McLuhan, who may very well be the godfather of contemporary media ecology studies. McLuhan and other founding scholars of media ecology teach us that many of the current media ecological questions have been a facet of human knowledge since the dawn of human history.

In his *Understanding Media*, McLuhan describes all human innovations as *media* or a *medium* that extend and/or alter the principle elements of the human life-world. This description illuminates his famous aphorism, “the medium is the message,” and helps convey his intention. McLuhan explores the ways in which the introduction of media “amplif[ies] or accelerate[s] existing processes” of human existence, which includes communication and knowledge (8). To say it another way, McLuhan argues that “the ‘message’ of any medium or technology is the change of scale or pace or pattern that it introduces into human affairs” (8). McLuhan draws our attention to the fact that oftentimes the content of media impacts human existence much less than its form. This does not make content unimportant—far from it—but, McLuhan reminds us that mediums that deliver content are an essential aspect of how one interprets and receives it. Thus, McLuhan argues that media, in the form of human invention and innovation,

delivers multiple messages that are capable of achieving acquiescence apart from the reflective deliberation of its recipients.

This focus upon how media environments influence the human life-world resonates with the work of Walter Ong. Ong advances the media ecology tradition and extends McLuhan's scholarship by delving into closer reflection upon shifts in human consciousness through an emphasis upon orality and literacy studies. In *Interfaces of the Word*, Ong considers the characteristics inherent to paradigms of thought in both oral and literate cultures as typically open and closed-systems, respectively. Ong indicates that oral cultures tend to emanate open-system thinking, whereas literate cultures have systems of thinking that are generally closed. Ong considers the open-system as an apt representation of the reality of human existence, for:

Life is openness. . . . Only an open-system paradigm represents the living individual in the way in which it must live, that is, in context, inextricably related to the other, the "environment." The environment acts on the living individual so that the individual responds and thereby changes the environment. (325)

Ong emphasizes that "the other" or "environment" plays an important part in shaping human thought. By open and closed-systems, Ong refers to cultural postures toward knowledge. In a closed-system, knowledge has to "fit" into a preconceived frame, but an open-system remains flexible. In an open-system the relevance of ideas consists of their practical and concrete application by the community. Closed-system thinking does not require public deliberation, for the system has the final word. Ong observes the fact that considerations of media environments must take into account cultural systems and

stances toward knowledge. Depending upon one's cultural paradigm, the extent to which it exists as open or closed inevitably predetermines what one has the ability to receive as knowledge.

Like many media ecology scholars, Postman acknowledges Plato's *Phaedrus* as a significant historical resource for their tradition. In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates tells the story of the Egyptian god Theuth, who invents letters, or writing. In the story, Theuth claims that writing will make humanity wiser, but to this King Thamus replies, "the discoverer of an art is not the best judge of the good or harm which will accrue to those who practice it" (275a). This story of Socrates emphasizes that technology always has widespread influences beyond what can be predicted, and the particular technology he focuses on, writing, turns out to be no different. The insight in this story serves as a guiding principle for the media ecology tradition because it underscores the fact that the original intention and purpose of any innovation or technique does not preclude the possibility of unintended consequences. In *Technopoly*, Postman uses the story to make the following point: "every technology is both a burden and a blessing; not either-or, but this-and-that" (4-5).

Postman expounds upon the story even further, and in the process reiterates McLuhan's famous aphorism, *the medium is the message*. As Postman states, "the uses made of any technology are largely determined by the structure of the technology itself—that is, that its functions follow from its form" (7). Like McLuhan, Postman stresses the influence of media form, but not to the exclusion of content. Postman and the media ecology tradition attempt to make up for the proportional deficit of scholarly study on the influence of media form, a deficit that owes much to the difficulty of detecting and

delineating it as compared to the content of media. The inquiries of media ecologists tend to highlight and disclose the unreflective effects of media as distinct from its substance. For example, focusing on how the *practice* of watching television influences human consciousness has different implications than looking at what the specific effects of a particular television show might be. In this example, the intellectual tradition of media ecology offers an additional perspective for cultural evaluation that operates beyond literary and rhetorical criticism. Literary and rhetorical criticism are evaluative perspectives that stand as predominant contemporary avenues of scholarly inquiry within the disciplines of literature and rhetoric, respectively (disciplines that often intersect with media ecology), but the media ecology perspective remains a distinct type of criticism.

Contemporary literary criticism owes much to the New Criticism pioneered by I. A. Richards and C. K. Ogden, coauthors of *The Meaning of Meaning*, a text that portrays language as an instrument. According to Richards and Ogden, “language . . . is best regarded as an instrument; and all instruments are extensions, or refinements, of our sense organs” (98). Since Richards was one of McLuhan’s professors at Cambridge, it makes sense to evaluate the role he may have had in shaping his thought, especially since early McLuhan seems to have been fascinated with certain aspects of New Criticism for developing new ways of approaching texts. However, in his article “McLuhan as Teacher,” Ong deemphasizes any profound influence that Richards may have had on the thought of later McLuhan. Ong notes that McLuhan’s early message, influenced by the New Criticism of Richards, “was not what it was to be later” (130). While McLuhan learns from the New Criticism of Richards, he eventually follows a different path. In the works of McLuhan that resonate most strongly with the media ecology tradition, one is

able to sense a profound respect for the past that remains explicitly lacking in the work of Richards. McLuhan's scholarship functions as a corrective to Richards in this regard. Furthermore, in his biography on McLuhan, Philip Marchand reports that McLuhan "was disgusted by [Richards's] atheism and his clinical psychologist mentality, which tended to base all of human sensibility on such things as 'stimuli' and 'impulses'" (*Marshall McLuhan* 37). Simply put, McLuhan exemplifies the open-system approach to knowledge that characterizes the media ecology tradition. McLuhan accepts those elements of Richards's thought that he finds helpful, but he discards those that contradict his intellectual awareness.

In his *Understanding Media*, McLuhan displays his ethical sensibilities when he decries the "somnambulism" of the following statement: "products of modern science are not in themselves good or bad; it is the way they are used that determines their value" (11). McLuhan replies that this statement "ignores the nature of the medium," for it amounts to saying, "'Firearms are in themselves neither good nor bad; it is the way they are used that determines their value.' That is, if the slugs reach the right people firearms are good" (11). Postman acknowledges the media ecology tradition's debt to McLuhan, but he also significantly expands the tradition by making sustained inquiry of media's ethical implications its chief standard. In fact, Postman argues that pondering the ethical questions of media, technology, and technique are foundational to explicating media ecology's roots in the tradition of humanism. On account of these humanistic roots, Postman offers the following four guiding questions that he considers the pillars of media ecology:

- (1) To what extent does a medium contribute to the uses and development of rational thought?
- (2) To what extent does a medium contribute to the development of democratic processes?
- (3) To what extent do new media give greater access to meaningful information?
- (4) To what extent do new media enhance or diminish our moral sense, our capacity for goodness? (*Humanism* 13-15).

It is not a coincidence that these questions appear in Postman's keynote address for the inaugural Media Ecology Association Conference at Fordham University on 16-17 June 2000. For Postman, the fourth question matters most because in a certain sense each of these media ecology questions has ethical implications in the background. Postman understands that rationality, democracy, and defining what counts as meaningful are in themselves ethical questions. Postman summarizes his vision for media ecology as an outright call to action: "it seems to me that those of us who are interested in media ecology ought to give more time than we do in addressing the role media play in . . . corrupting or purifying out morality" (15). Through his exhortation to ethical action, Postman seeks to define media ecology more concretely along the lines of humanism, thereby aligning it with the premodern rhetorical tradition.

4.3 MEDIA ECOLOGY AND THE PREMODERN RHETORICAL TRADITION

The inquiries of media ecology show us why the historical principles of the premodern rhetorical tradition are still relevant for our contemporary moment. Through

its focus on the effects of media upon the construction/reconstruction of consciousness, culture, and communication, media ecology acts as a branch of knowledge that corresponds to the open-system awareness typical of the premodern rhetorical tradition. Media ecology scholarship greatly benefits this project because its central inquiries help illuminate the profound epistemological gulf between modern technological culture and cultures that were traditionally rhetorical.

The epistemological differences of modernity as compared with rhetorical cultures are among the most foundational of truisms within the media ecology tradition. On this point, Walter Ong agrees with and frequently cites C. S. Lewis. For example, Ong opens his book, *Rhetoric, Romance, and Technology*, by citing Lewis's *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century*. Ong cites Lewis's idea that "Rhetoric is the greatest barrier between us and our ancestors" (61) to make the following point:

[W]hen we say that Western culture until recently was rhetorical, we are saying something more specific than that it was oral. We mean also that Western culture, after the invention of writing and before the industrial revolution, made a science or "art" of its orality. (*Rhetoric* 2)

Ong pays tribute to the importance of Lewis's scholarship for highlighting the evolution of rhetorical consciousness through the study of literature within the transitional sixteenth century. Elsewhere Ong acknowledges the significance of the sixteenth century in the alteration of the rhetorical way of life, but he does so specifically through the person and ideas of Peter Ramus. Ong argues that through Ramus, "the rhetorical approach to life . . . is sealed off into a cul-de-sac" (*Ramus* 291). Ong sees that, in many ways, Ramus

initiates the modernity that would eventually separate itself from rhetorical culture, for through his method,

Speech is no longer a medium in which the human mind and sensibility lives. It is resented, rather, as an accretion to thought . . . the perfect rhetoric would be to have no rhetoric at all. Thought becomes a private, or even an antisocial enterprise. (291)

Ramus achieves this by rearranging the jurisdictions of rhetoric and dialectic (logic), thus disrupting one of the great equilibriums of Western thought. When Ramus removes the rhetorical function of generating knowledge and gives it to dialectic, he makes rhetoric mere style and delivery. Ong claims that this “displacement and rearrangement of rhetoric is, from one point of view, the story of the modern world” (*Rhetoric* 8).

Unlike modern culture, oral and residually-oral cultures depend upon the community for constituting and preserving knowledge. Alongside Lewis, Ong notices that within premodern rhetorical cultures even their literature contains a certain type of *oral residue*. Ong defines this oral residue as:

[H]abits of thought and expression tracing back to preliterate situations or practice, or deriving from the dominance of the oral as a medium in a given culture, or indicating a reluctance or inability to dissociate the written medium from the spoken. Such residue is not especially contrived and seldom conscious at all. (25-26)

Both Ong and Lewis understand that the characteristics and values of the rhetorical way of life are reinforced, not lost, through the writings of a given oral culture. In *Orality and Literacy*, Ong describes the general communal characteristics of thought and expression

that are operative in the consciousness of premodern oral and residually-oral cultures (36-57). Among these characteristics Ong references the fact that oral and residually-oral cultures tend to be *agonistically toned* (43-45). This characteristic provides insight into the devastating impact that Ramist dialectic has upon traditional rhetorical education and the premodern consciousness. In an agonistically toned culture ideas must be defended through dialogue, but Ramist dialectic perpetuates a very different educational model. Contrary to traditional rhetorical education, pupils are not taught to practice and defend their position by learning both sides of an issue. Rather, one learns how to merely dictate one's own private reasoning. This educational method implies that knowledge exists quite independently of, and contrary to, the need for it be tested and accepted by the community.

In "A Media Ecology Review," Lance Strate perceives Aristotle's theory of rhetoric as one of the formal roots of media ecology. According to Strate, Aristotle's well-known definition of rhetoric, "the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion," offers a starting point for media ecology scholarship "insofar that *means* is synonymous with *medium*, and rhetoric refers to the study of a category of technique" (32). By extending Strate's insight we find that, in essence, media ecology scholarship functions as a specific rhetorical endeavor that *assesses* the persuasiveness of media, technology, and/or technique. By invoking rhetoric as a *study* of technique rather than technique itself, Strate raises an important distinction.

The practice of rhetoric as technique harkens back to the days of the early sophists. However, Strate's awareness serves to remind us of the fact that rhetoric as technique violates the premodern rhetorical tradition from Isocrates to Cicero to

Augustine. Because technique glorifies pure form divorced from content, these scholars understand that the fundamental nature of rhetoric makes it patently anti-technique. In particular, Augustine commits the Christian rhetor to the first principle of love, which by being attentive to the particular simply cannot authentically function within the one-size-fits-all mentality of technique. According to J. J. Murphy, Augustine’s rhetoric understands that “there is no possible rhetorical technique or skill that can be learned (or taught) that will equip one human heart to speak to another heart” (*Rhetoric in the Middle Ages* 291). Moreover, Augustine’s high, middle, and low style teaches the rhetor to pay attention to differences in human receptivity. The false notions that attempt to make rhetoric a technique imply that human beings are a homogenous entity, easy to manipulate, and without individual will—all of which directly contradict the principles of the premodern rhetorical tradition.

4.4 EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVES OF MEDIA ECOLOGY

The topic of education provides a definitive correlation and general intellectual agenda among scholars working within the media ecology tradition. The most predominant members of the media ecology tradition voice serious concerns with respect to the state of education in our contemporary moment. A large amount of Postman’s cultural commentary specifically targets education as its chief subject. In *The End of Education*, Postman articulates that his primary purpose for writing the book stems from his belief that “many of our most vexing and painful social problems could be ameliorated if we knew how to school our young” (ix). While Postman places great optimism in the school as a cultural institution, he still knows “that education is not the

same thing as schooling, and that, in fact, not much of our education takes place in school” (ix). At any rate, Postman intends the title of the book to make a clear distinction between studies of the means and ends of education. Although questions of means have their place, Postman thinks that questions of this sort have the tendency to “evade the issue of what schools are for” (x). Thus, Postman commences with the goal of *redefining the value of school*, which is also the book’s subtitle, and makes available a media ecological perspective of education.

Elsewhere Postman explicitly argues for the humanism of media ecology, but in the *End of Education* one is able to identify some particular ideals that place this work and others like it in a category of media ecology that follows in the premodern rhetorical tradition of liberal education. In order to advance his definition of the value of education, Postman finds it necessary for one to first consider the role of *narrative* in providing purpose and meaning for one’s life. According to Postman, traditional narratives, such as those found through religious affiliation, provide their adherents with a metaphysical reason for education. In *Building a Bridge to the 18th Century*, Postman defines narrative as

[B]ig stories—stories that are sufficiently profound and complex to offer explanations of the origins and future of a people; stories that construct ideals, prescribe rules of conduct, specify sources of authority, and, in doing all this, provide a sense of continuity and purpose. (101)

In premodern times these traditional narratives are reiterated through the ideals of rhetorical education. In particular, the practices of rhetorical education prescribe the

basis by which traditional moral sense develops, and, in turn, makes one fit to participate in communal decision making.

However, Postman identifies another great narrative, the narrative of science, that receives much of its original power by building upon the ideas of an ordered and rational universe offered through the narrative of Christianity, but which now offers its own reasons for education. For Postman, all narratives function like that of a god, but that which distinguishes the *science-god* is that it “gives more control and more power than any other god before it” (*End of Education* 9). However, if one were to ask, “What moral instruction do you give us?” the great narrative of science “maintains a tight-lipped silence” that reveals its real character (9). Postman explains that since the science-god begets the technology-god, their narratives differ only slightly. Postman tells us that whereas “the science-god speaks to us of both understanding and power, the technology god speaks only of power” (10). Because of these modern gods, or narratives, Postman sees the change that has occurred in education: “There was a time when educators became famous for providing reasons for learning; now they become famous for inventing a method” (26). Postman provides an analysis of modern education that illustrates a generalizable media ecology theme. By emphasizing means, method, and technique to the exclusion of traditional learning, modern education functions as an essentially amoral enterprise that deflects the importance of moral questions.

Postman argues that modern education offers the illusion of power and control, and solidifies itself through the reshaping of the school by its technology-god. The irresistible narrative of technology asks us to believe the following:

The technology is here or will be; we must use it because it is there; we will become the kind of people the technology requires us to be; and, whether we like it or not, we will remake our institutions to accommodate the technology. All of this must happen because it is good for us, but in any case, we have no choice. (39-40)

Here we cross the concept of *choice* again as it intersects with modern education.

According to Postman, technology operates as an unreflective narrative within the principles of modern education, a narrative that works to deny choice. The narrative of technology denies choice by suggesting that choices pertaining to its legitimacy have already been made, and it has won.

We find an extension of this principle in Ong's orality/literacy studies. In *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue*, Ong offers a case study of a technology that alters consciousness through the elimination of certain choices. The particular technology that Ong evaluates is print, and Ramus, as a product of his times, basically reworks premodern rhetorical education as a result of the print technology that paves the way for his method. Through the Ramist method rhetoric becomes an isolated print-based discipline with specific borders. When the visual method overtakes the milieu of oral/aural education, Ong explains, rhetoric becomes "controlled by silent written and printed documents more than by the spoken word" (291). With this development Western education begins to virtually ignore the historical practices of the premodern rhetorical tradition. By walking away from this tradition the intellectual virtue of practical reason, necessary for public deliberation and judgment, begins to atrophy. Print alters rhetorical education without offering a choice; it implies that since it exists it must

be acquiesced to. Through Ramus's print-based method of education, rhetoric becomes conceived of, once again, as a mere technique.

Education from the perspective of the media ecology and premodern rhetorical traditions emphasizes the public role of practical reason and common sense. The creation and elimination of choice subsists as a distinctly rhetorical enterprise, but when rhetoric becomes a technique the community loses a crucial resource for questioning the effect of the actual methods and techniques that are operative in denying human choice through the worldview of scientism. The technique of print favors the predictability of the modern scientific method to the exclusion of rhetorical education, which teaches the importance of responding to situations that have a relative contingency for the human life-world. To this end, Gerard Hauser explains,

Scientific investigation presupposes that nature is governed by laws that exist apart from the individuals who discover and make them known. Rhetoric belongs to a different order of knowledge. Its domain is the *practical reasoning* that occurs when the contingencies of human relations require thoughtful choices exceeding criteria of regularity, prediction, and control. (*Vernacular Voices* 93-94)

Modern education applies the productive attributes of science and technology to areas of learning that are of a different order of knowledge. McLuhan also recognizes the impact that print has in altering human consciousness. For McLuhan, the phenomenon of print creates "an analytic sequence of step-by-step processes," becomes "the blue-print of all mechanization to follow," and inevitably shapes "not only production and marketing procedures but all other areas of life, from education to city planning" ("Playboy

Interview” 244). Print serves as the “blue-print” for modern education’s preoccupation with method and technique, and by reorienting the traditional educational posture of humanity it empowers scientism to use it in ways that accord with its own purposes. From Lewis’s perspective, “we have seen the sciences beating back the humanities,” because the “new learning” of scientism “makes room for itself by creating a new ignorance” (*English Literature* 31). Likewise, as Robert Wuthnow explains in *The Restructuring of American Religion*, we presently see an “emphasis on teaching science and technology, often at the expense of programs in the humanities and at the cost of introducing a new element of utilitarianism into the educational system as a whole” (284). Thus, our public institutions of learning have grown to pride themselves on serving the function of utility by offering “practical” technical training and skills rather than the “unusable” virtues of rhetorical education that produce wisdom, deliberation, and practical reason.

4.5 SCIENTISM AND TECHNIQUE

Media ecologists would be quick to agree that there are many reasons to celebrate science and technology within their proper sphere. However, the uncritical adoption of scientific or technological advancements as inherently good or correct falls prey to the illusion of scientism and technique. In *Rhetorical Darwinism*, Thomas Lessl defines scientism as “the assumption that only the techniques of inquiry used within the natural sciences have epistemic worth” (22). Through modern education the methods and techniques of scientism produce unreflective language, habits, and ideas that support a technological agenda that opposes traditional values. Scientism and technique help to

legitimate the new myth of technology, which expects autonomous loyalty to its role in our lives. The force of technology in our historical moment comes through its ability to persuade us of its inevitability.

This myth of technology pervades our consciousness through scientism and technique, and to this day continues to receive more and more sway within human institutions. At present scientism and technique influence the modern consciousness to such a degree that it remains a generally unchallenged assumption that all of our problems can be solved by science and through better technology. The media ecology perspective looks at technology a bit differently. It sees technology as a type of Faustian bargain that provides great benefits but also takes away features of human identity. As an illustration, one could look at the impact of the industrial revolution in creating more jobs while simultaneously producing an assembly line mentality, which tends to divorce man from taking pride in his craft. The benefits that modern technology gives nearly always fails to enhance features of human existence. Instead, modern technology suppresses things that are uniquely human and replaces them with artificial versions. From this perspective media ecologists recognize that, in the modern framework, technology merely solves the problems that it has itself created. Today nearly all references to man-made environmental devastation result from the methods and techniques that technological progress creates. Ironically, the modern consciousness looks for better methods and techniques afforded by the very same technological progress as the solution.

In our contemporary consciousness technology receives justification through our faith in its advances, a faith that places humanity's focus of attention on the future rather than the past. Wuthnow argues, "It is through science and technology that we see

ourselves drawn toward some inevitable, yet mysterious, future. The advance of technology seems to us predetermined, relentlessly leading us toward some goal that it, not we, has established” (*Restructuring* 286). Our belief in the inevitability of technology eliminates any felt desire to criticize or question it. The products of technology provide the modern mind its reality. Modern technology has proven its ability to give us a plethora of choices within varied and widespread categories that were never available before its contemporary period of influence. As Postman states, “because of its lengthy, intimate, and inevitable relationship with culture, technology does not invite a close examination of its own consequences” (*Technopoly* xii). Since we live in an age that regards the specialized knowledge of modern technology as “a form of wisdom” (11), important questions go unasked. Most importantly, when we acquiesce to the inevitability of technology what does that mean for education, free will, and choice?

Media ecologists like Jacques Ellul, for example, do not generally embrace the idea that we are technologically determined. Ellul believes that at a corporate level we still have the ability to choose the role that technology will play in the course of our existence. On the other hand, as Ellul explains in a foreword to *The Technological Society*,

If man—if each one of us—abdicates his responsibilities with regard to values; if each of us limits himself to leading a trivial existence in a technological civilization, with greater adaptation and increasing success as his sole objectives; if we do not even consider the possibility of making a stand against these determinants, then everything *will* happen as I have

described it, and the determinants *will* be transformed into inevitabilities.

(xxix)

Ellul sees that we have a choice to make with respect to the inevitability of technology in our lives. Ellul wants us to understand that when we choose to uncritically consent to technological progress all of its harmful implications will then become inevitable for us. For Ellul, the future direction of technological society remains within our power to control, but when we do not accept our responsibility to choose its path we also forfeit our ability to choose the consequences.

Since our society consistently ascribes autonomous characteristics to technology, it shows that we have decided to let technology run its course without our interference. In *The Illusion of Technique*, William Barrett describes how, in the modern framework, technology seems to “have a will of its own,” that nobody “strictly controls it,” and furthermore, “It seems to live a life of its own, and yet in one way it is nothing but ourselves in our collective life” (208). Barrett helps us see that, as a result of our uncritical devotion to technology, we have come to believe of it in terms whereby it seems to exist, evolve, and function apart from us. In this way, modern society goes along with the current of technological progress, a value that exists as an end in and of itself.

Media ecologists have long recognized the alternative value structure that modern technology announces. Through the worldview of scientism, modern technological values such as standardization, efficiency, and progress are elevated above traditional values. Through scientism and technique, modern forms of technology contribute to the debunking of traditional values by favoring only those types of human habits that

perpetuate the values it recognizes as valid. The values of scientism and technique run counter to the development of rational thought, the democratic process, and humanity's moral sense. In *Technics and Civilization*, Lewis Mumford reminds us that although technological innovation and mechanization has existed since the beginning of recorded human history, the modern situation differs in that humanity now "adapt[s] the whole mode of life to the pace and the capacities of the machine" (4). Mumford shows us that, whereas the premodern individual thinks of his tools and techniques as "extensions of his own organism" (321), modern cultures have come to a place where they think of their techniques as having an independent existence. The worldview of scientism authorizes the autonomy of technique and, through the perceived success of its technological products, justifies unreflective belief in its existence apart from human critique.

In *Permanence and Change*, Kenneth Burke describes the phenomenon of science upon the modern mind as having "an occupational morality all its own" (44). Burke's insight parallels the essence of scientism, which is "revealed by its contributions to the break-down or cancellation of traditional moralities" (44). In a world tempered by the grand organizing worldview of scientism, choice and action no longer stem from traditional guiding principles but from technique. In *After Virtue*, Alasdair MacIntyre holds the Enlightenment era responsible for altering the historical coordinates necessary for moral choice and action by annulling the language of traditional morality through the introduction of its false ethical philosophy. MacIntyre describes "the language of morality" in our present moment as being in a "state of grave disorder" due to the fact that we "lack those contexts from which their significance derived" (2). The values of scientism are brought into existence when the Enlightenment era excludes the premodern

worldview and replaces it with a “mechanistic account of human action” (84). With this new account of human action there comes “a thesis about the predictability of human behavior and a thesis about the appropriate ways to manipulate human behavior” (84). As a result of the scientism that the Enlightenment era allows, the subtle dismissal of traditional value leaves humanity unable to recognize that they are not capable of making moral choices in the same way that their ancestors did.

Scientism diminishes historical human moral choices in favor of ones that support a technological agenda. In *The Technological Society*, Jacques Ellul differentiates science from technique, but concludes that technique needs science in order to achieve progress. When Ellul claims that “technique has taken over all of man’s activities” (4), he describes a certain cast of mind that no longer has the capacity to reason or act apart from technological influence. Ellul delivers a stark depiction of how technique “provides a model; it specifies attitudes that are valid once and for all” (6). Through this insight Ellul illustrates how scientism’s technological agenda affects human choice. Through technique scientism creates a world where certain behaviors, such as traditional virtues, are made systematically irrelevant to existence within the modern technological society.

The autonomous philosophy behind modern technology can be summarized as, “if it can be done, it should be done.” But with this belief humanity substitutes aspects of its character for the character of the machine. In *Technopoly*, Postman explains *Scientism* as a group of techniques developed from the methods of natural science that are problematic when misapplied to the human life-world through social science. For Postman, social science exemplifies another form of storytelling; however, it passes itself off as one of the hard sciences. Similarly, in the article “The Rhetoric of Social Science,” Richard

Weaver refers to the literature of social scientists as a corpus that appears to have “smuggled assumptions” (191) when it comes to areas of human existence that cannot be explained empirically. Weaver explains how terms with a predicate of value can never be arrived at empirically, for value does not exist in nature; instead, their meaning depends upon human judgment. Both Weaver and Postman understand that social science makes *suggestions* as to how one should judge its findings, but its main suggestion comes by representing *further research* as the thing most valuable and essential. Weaver refers to this as “pedantic analysis,” or “analysis for analysis’ sake, with no real thought of relevance or application . . . it is assumed that an endless collection of data will necessarily yield fruits” (193).

Additionally, Postman describes how scientism makes human beings into objects that are to be studied and classified neatly, for its techniques oppose the “diversity, complexity, and ambiguity of human judgment” (*Technopoly* 158). According to Postman, scientism represents

[T]he desperate hope, and wish, and ultimately the illusory belief that some standardized set of procedures called “science” can provide us with an unimpeachable source of moral authority, a superhuman basis for answers to questions like “What is life, and when, and why?” “Why is death, and suffering?” “What is right and wrong to do?” “What are good and evil deeds?” “How ought we to think and feel and behave?” . . . To ask of science, or expect of science, or accept unchallenged from science the answers to such questions is Scientism. (162-163)

Postman announces his alarm with respect to scientism's tendency to invite unreflective allegiance to science and technology at the expense of traditional human belief systems. Postman's analysis obliges us to ask ourselves which appears more benevolent: scientism or tradition? To put it another way, does it appear within the human interest to continue receiving moral dictates through faith traditions or do we have reason to believe that receiving them from science should produce a more benevolent outcome?

4.6 THE MEDIA ECOLOGY OF *THE ABOLITION OF MAN*

In *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis explains the necessity of a belief in objective value for the pursuit of traditional virtue to be possible. At present, scientism denies traditional virtue and objective value and places in its stead new values, such as standardization, efficiency, and progress, which are not open for debate. Lewis describes scientism as an unreflective belief that values endless scientific and technological pursuit at the expense of traditional virtue. Lewis claims that for those who have already stepped outside traditional morality, the powers of science function as their means of power over others. Through shared concern over the educational effects of scientism, Lewis supports scholarship in the tradition of media ecology. Like Lewis, media ecology inquiry sees scientism as an unreflective worldview that replaces objective value with technological alternatives, thus diminishing humanity's moral sense and capacity for goodness. Media ecology inquiry allows us to understand the contemporary relevance of Lewis's rhetoric and philosophy of education.

As an example of scientism's educational methods, Lewis returns to *The Green Book* authors and claims, "the whole purpose of their book is so to condition the young

reader that he will share their approval” (28-29). The authors want the reader to share in their opinion by judging as irrational that which premodern societies consider the very essence of rationality, the *Tao*. *The Abolition of Man* describes three different character types, the Innovators, the Conditioners, and textbook authors. Each of these characters do not regard the *Tao* as the master rhetorician; rather, they want to place people in the false position of believing that they are able to make their own choices apart from the constraints of tradition. As we have seen, scientism merely provides the illusion of individual choice. Scientism turns its back on human tradition through implicit suggestions, not arguments, about the absurdity of objective value. Whereas premodern societies believe the *Tao* provides the traditional choices whereby a man or woman comes to know the model of virtue, the authors of *The Green Book* propagate an alternative value structure announced by scientism, the Innovators seek to educate humanity that scientism represents the one objective answer to the deep questions of life, and the Conditioners make men and women into objects with the illusion of choice. The choices offered in a world dominated by scientism are arbitrary—they do not contribute to the development of what traditional societies deem a virtuous life. Whatever choice humankind believes they still have remains subject to the dictates of scientism.

Lewis concludes that making choices apart from the rhetoric of the *Tao* reduces humans to something other than human. It turns out to be the abolition of man because scientism shapes human beings by narratives and value structures that no longer resemble the traditional understanding of what it means to be a human being. The crucial issue, then, becomes scientism’s mediation of values, motives, and conscience through human acquiescence to a technological narrative over and against the traditional narratives

depicted in the *Tao*. For Lewis, human beings receive their definition by making choices within the rhetoric of the *Tao*. The choices made within the *Tao* do not need to align with its precepts in order for one to live a coherent existence within the traditional narrative it provides. Lewis describes this well when he explains that although he does “not enjoy the society of small children,” when he speaks from within the *Tao* he recognizes this as a defect (19). Therefore, one may make choices contrary to that which the *Tao* considers good, but this does not mean one is choosing outside the *Tao*. They may be choosing against the *Tao* for any number of reasons, but Lewis argues that they know they are responsible for their choices. Within the *Tao* one will “recognize a quality which *demand*s a certain response from us whether we make it or not” (19). In contrast, choice-making within the world of scientism alleviates the notion of guilt since it offers the illusion that any choice remains as good as the next, provided that it falls within the purview of the new technological value structure.

For Lewis, the powers of science will not necessarily be the cause of man’s abolition, but “the world of post-humanity” (75) will come when the authority it provides is used malevolently by some people to control others. Lewis understands that the textbook as an educational medium represents a powerful technological tool that has the tendency to be used by some to contribute to the type of narrow thinking that scientism favors. The very first sentence of *The Abolition of Man* offers an assessment of the potential abuse that this technology can have upon the human mind: “I doubt whether we are sufficiently attentive to the importance of elementary text books” (1). Lewis recognizes the importance of maintaining a posture of attentiveness toward the values that technological mediums encourage us to adopt. Lewis describes the general mindset

of the modern individual as unreflectively submissive toward the technological value of progress. The modern individual, according to Lewis, has a vague sense that technological advancement offers benefits to humanity at-large because it increases the so-called human power over Nature. This type of language causes Lewis to look closely at three colossal technological advancements during his historical moment, “the aeroplane, the wireless, and the contraceptive” (54). Lewis reaches the conclusion that “what we call Man’s power over Nature turns out to be a power exercised by some men over other men” (55), because in reality, “each new power won *by* man is a power *over* man as well” (58). Lewis sees that those who have already stepped outside traditional morality use technology to perpetuate an ideology of scientism. Scientism promotes its educational agenda through the myth of technological progress and preordains how the next generation should live, and move, and have its being. Thus, the next generation adheres to the values of scientism without critical reflection and without a choice.

The theme of scientism, as evidenced within *The Abolition of Man*, brings Lewis into alignment with media ecology scholars. For Lewis and media ecologists alike, the world and subsequent mindset fashioned by scientism contributes to unreflective acquiescence to technological progress at the cost of humanity’s moral diminishment. For Lewis, the mindset perpetuated by scientism seeks to “subdue reality to the wishes of men” and “the solution is a technique” (77). In his text *C. S. Lewis for the Third Millennium*, Peter Kreeft rightly identifies that Lewis believes “technology has replaced religion at the center of our consciousness and our life” (22). Scientism’s dismissal of traditional human values portrays an affront upon humanity’s different expressions of the pursuit of morality and godliness.

As argued throughout, Lewis demonstrates rhetorical/media ecological attentiveness in matters that concern both media ecology and the premodern rhetorical tradition. Lewis demonstrates rhetorical attentiveness in that he merely builds upon tradition; he does not develop a new scheme in response to scientism. He understands that more often than not man needs to be reminded rather than instructed in regard to behavior and action. Lewis addresses the common man to persuade him to think through and reason whether scientism makes sense as an ethical philosophy. He sees the influence of scientism and tries to refute its claims by offering tradition in its stead, thus persuading man to remember the constraints of the past, which leads to life. By displaying his rhetorical sensibilities Lewis joins the premodern rhetorical tradition, which recognizes the unity of rhetoric and ethical philosophy. Lewis recognizes that scientism diminishes human choice and makes rhetorical admonition unnecessary, thus banishing the context whereby virtue becomes possible.

Lewis's media ecology sensibilities bring him into scholarship that addresses some of the most important questions of our day. Lance Strate gives us further ground to bring Lewis into the field of media ecology when he states,

By not claiming the role of founder of a discipline, and not naming anyone else as the inventor, Postman left open the origins of the field, and implied that media ecology has been in existence in one form or another since antiquity. It follows that individuals need not use the term "media ecology" in order to have their work categorized as such. Indeed, they need not have been alive when the term was coined in order to have it identified as media ecological. ("A Media Ecology Review" 4)

Like Lewis, media ecological inquiry realizes that problems arise when our media environments replace traditional ethical perspectives. From a Christian perspective, Lewis defends the foundation of virtually all premodern ethical systems of thought. In a letter to Arthur Clarke Lewis exclaims, “a race devoted to the increase of its own power by technology with complete indifference to ethics *does* seem to me a cancer in the Universe” (Green and Hooper 173). Lewis understands that the uncontrolled growth of technology, accompanied by a culture with an indifference to traditional ethics, spells disaster. When that same culture considers the uncontrolled growth of technology an inherent value it spells the “abolition of man.”

The implications of the divide between scientism and the *Tao* are most important in respect to the issue of our knowledge of right and wrong. When man goes astray under the dictates of the *Tao* he has the sense that something not only should be done but can be done to make things right. In a different way, scientism relies upon emotivism: “the doctrine that all evaluative judgments and more specifically all moral judgments are *nothing but* expressions of preference, expressions of attitude or feeling, insofar as they are moral or evaluative in character” (MacIntyre, *After Virtue* 11-12). Emotivism makes moral action mere personal preference and, when added to scientism, eliminates the idea of guilt and makes remorse an artifice. Lewis believes in the free will of the individual, but when an entire culture unreflectively succumbs to scientism it is no longer a fair match. Traditional values provide the coherent basis for scientific inquiry; they provide the *why* for the *what*. However, scientism seeks to eliminate traditional values so that *what* becomes the *why*. Michael Aeschliman discerns that since Lewis believes people are made in the image of God (*imago Dei*), it causes him to think of them in terms of *res*

sacra homo—the doctrine of human beings as a holy object (*Restitution* 15). The worldview of scientism, on the other hand, views people as mere υλη—material to be controlled and told what to do through propaganda. Through the worldview of scientism, modern education teaches ordinary people to discard traditional approaches to life. However, Lewis attempts to reach us through rhetorically reasoned approaches, which he believes we will respond to due to our inherent rhetorical nature.

4.7 CONCLUSION

Premodern rhetorical education defends traditional communal values and virtues and uses them to train the will of the next generation. When the philosophical ideal of endless speculation detaches from its rhetorical counterpart, the methods and techniques of scientism produce modern education as we know it. Although modern education seems to distance itself from questions of value, in reality it advances values of its own that are characteristically technological: standardization, efficiency, and progress. Modern education suggests that questions of ethics and virtue are within the province of logic, but in actuality a virtuous life requires the heart. Human beings take on the character of a machine within an educational system that ignores the role of the heart in deliberation and ethical action.

Lewis shows us that he believes education should produce a certain type of person. He does not think the authors of *The Green Book* intentionally seek to harm or corrupt the mind of children, but as Lewis states, “I am not concerned with what they desired but with the effect their book will certainly have on the schoolboy’s mind” (*Abolition* 5). Lewis shows us that pursuing knowledge for its own sake supports the

endless speculation of scientism and is not harmless. Certain values and certain definitions of humanity are always being advanced both implicitly and explicitly through education. Modern education has definite ideas about what counts as value and it achieves its force by equating all knowledge with only that which it can verify. Lewis understands that “A great many of those who ‘debunk’ traditional or (as they would say) ‘sentimental’ values have in the background values of their own which they believe to be immune from the debunking process” (29).

In the first edition of *Classical Rhetoric & its Christian & Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times*, James J. Kennedy states, “Ordinary people follow their feelings and habits, and for them to be taught the truth it is necessary not only to make use of logical reasoning, but to arouse emotion. Here is the realm of rhetoric” (173). The pupils of modern education are taught to believe that one’s emotions are irrelevant to truth, and that all action can and should be dictated by reason divorced from the heart. Removing emotion from the apprehension of truth leaves the pupil as easy prey under the propaganda of human conditioners. Modern propaganda of this sort actively advances “the world of post-humanity which, some knowingly and some unknowingly, nearly all men in all nations are at present labouring to produce” (75). Ong reminds us that with the advent of the modern technological age, rhetoric is “disrupted, displaced, and rearranged. It became a bad word.” Ong continues,

Rhetoric was a bad word for those given to technology because it represented “soft” thinking, thinking attuned to unpredictable human actuality and decisions, whereas technology, based on science, was devoted to “hard” thinking, that is, formally logical thinking, attunable to

unvarying physical laws (which, however, are no more real than variable human free acts). (*Rhetoric* 8)

The type of knowledge that one receives through premodern rhetorical education does not equate with scientific knowledge, but that makes it no less real. For Lewis, the *Tao* must simply be proclaimed; its persuasiveness comes elsewhere. The *Tao* must be apprehended by the listener, not proven by the teacher. The judgments of its dictates are formed through practical reason, a crucial element of premodern rhetorical education. Premodern rhetorical education involves an inherent degree of creativity; thus, its model of learning runs contrary to, and serves as a corrective to, technique. Barrett declares that “Genuine creativity is precisely that for which we can give no prescribed technique or recipe”; thus, in premodern rhetorical education we find that technique ceases to be sufficient, for creativity simply cannot be taught by a method (*Illusion* 19). As Burke teaches in *Permanence and Change*, human beings and their life-world, as we know it from lived experience, are recalcitrant (255-261). Thinking of either human beings or their life-world according to technique depicts an illusion that we accept at our peril. Thinking of rhetoric as another technique eliminates one of our only possible antidotes to the negative influence of modern education.

CHAPTER FIVE

C. S. LEWIS'S MEANINGFUL ALTERNATIVES
TO MODERN EDUCATION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Before discussing C. S. Lewis's meaningful alternatives to modern education I would like to first briefly review this interpretive project's argument up to this point. *The Abolition of Man* functions as a rhetoric and philosophy of education that implicitly advances ideals within the premodern rhetorical tradition. Lewis aligns with the premodern rhetorical tradition by arguing for the necessity of developing virtue in the educational process, most importantly the intellectual virtue of practical reason. Through a shared belief in the objective value of practical reason the rhetorical tradition formed the epistemological backdrop of premodern societies. In this milieu knowledge was a public possession of common sense (*sensus communis*). Through public discourse society determined what constituted knowledge based upon its relevance for living a virtuous life. The premodern rhetorical tradition represents the model of learning that Lewis defends against modern education in *The Abolition of Man*. Modern education disseminates an interpretation of reality through the lens of scientism and uses method and technique instead of discourse to constitute public knowledge. This type of learning diminishes belief in objective moral value and through its neglect causes the public function of practical reason to atrophy. Lewis's rhetoric and philosophy of education offers meaningful alternatives to modern education and functions as a corrective.

Lewis's rhetoric and philosophy of education promotes a form of learning that looks entirely different than the modern model. This concluding chapter begins by considering the irony of the ethical shift in the modern American university, which makes educational alternatives a foremost necessity for survival. Within this context I take into consideration how Lewis's rhetoric and philosophy of education successfully responds to the present milieu only when one takes deliberate action. Lewis causes one to see that the educational ideals within the premodern rhetorical tradition offer a solution to the harmful effects of modern education. For these ideals to be enacted successfully, it takes individuals who are beneficently obstinate toward the operational methods and techniques of modern education, which run counter to the common sense practices and values of regular people. As a corrective to modern education, Lewis prescribes the deliberate and precise use of language within public discourse. Although modern education supports the trivialization of language, using language with precision in public settings works as a practical antidote to the implicit assumptions that scientism advances regarding its own monopoly on knowledge. Finally, this chapter assesses the ways in which Lewis's educational alternatives counteract the assumptions of scientism by recognizing the importance of training the emotions, not just the intellect, of the next generation, by celebrating the intellectual rigor inherent to faith perspectives, and finally by eschewing the epistemological predisposition of doubt as a viable educational stance.

5.2 THE MODERN UNIVERSITY

Today many of us take it as a truism that the public universities within the United States have always been secular institutions. However, by following George Marsden's

interpretation of higher education in *The Soul of the American University*, one finds that the ideals of many American public universities were “shaped by a powerful and distinctly Protestant heritage” (4). An identifiable feature of this heritage involves its virtual inability to distinguish the ideals of American culture from those of the Protestant faith. Failing to differentiate the ideals of culture from faith trivializes the worldview of the latter once higher education is reformed through the principles of modern science. Marsden tells of the implicit irony involved when these institutions become intolerant to the knowledge of the very faith perspective that helped to shape them. Many nineteenth-century leaders of education had strong Christian beliefs, which they believed were complementary with modern ideals. This fusion results in inclusiveness for diverse educational perspectives that ironically leads to the exclusion of faith as a legitimate area of intellectual inquiry within academia. According to Marsden, the educational commitments of modernity would eventually become the most telling features of the American university, and “reverence for scientific authority was the major intellectual manifestation of the new commitments” (99).

In the nineteenth-century, the reverence for scientific authority gains currency through the belief that any of its discoveries would inevitably be harmonious with divine revelation. However, the general posture shifts, making scientific inquiry free and unhindered from any unscientific Biblical interpretations which might dictate its boundaries. For example, the following evaluation displays a common theme of this era:

The Bible had been used to argue for a flat earth and against Galileo for a geocentric universe. Spiritual and demonic explanations of human ills had blocked early medicine and study of anatomy . . . biblical prohibitions had

been used in the Middle Ages to forbid usury . . . Genesis had been used as a basis for determining the age of the earth . . . (118)

This assessment represents the momentum building around the theme that science, not religion, should be the starting point for interpreting the adequacy of truth claims for knowledge and belief, not vice versa. Making science a more reliable criterion of truth than the revelation of Biblical scripture seems harmless for the educational leaders of this era, because the change in conviction is a matter of expediency. Through science, it is thought, man is able to discover more about God's other revelation, that of nature. Thus, initially, the American university is still, in general, under the impression that the purposes of science would ultimately work in favor of religion.

However, it is not long before "standards for science that a priori excluded considerations of faith would become the norm" (131). The years that follow the Civil War and before World War I are times of great optimism for citizens of the United States, and this optimism is applied to the character of human beings as well. Human nature came to be viewed as essentially good, and within democratic society it is generally thought that man can be relied upon to do the right thing. Once the benefits and developments brought forth through the free inquiry of science take root, progress within all spheres of human activity seem inevitable and inherently good. Scientific inquiry takes on a certain character of its own, somehow representing a more "honest" way of approaching life, an approach that does not seem to allow for any motive beyond that of simply supplying knowledge.

Alongside the expanse of free scientific inquiry comes technological advancements in the public and private sectors. These societal advancements create

financial possibilities for academia to take advantage of, and, as a result, generate an influx of professional opportunities that require technical and scientific know-how. Before long, as Marsden explains, “the most lucrative function of the universities was their service to capitalist society in providing technical expertise, much of the expansion of programs would be in areas where religion was of little concern” (270). Within this context many people think of moral education as impractical and unessential; moreover, at this time, moral education is still made available, and thought to belong, within one’s church or home. With the conclusion of World War II, the optimism of modernity wanes, but the universities remain the dominant places whereby culture and the relevance of morality are determined in America. Technical training relegates the traditional function of education further into the periphery so that character formation becomes an “Ethics” or “Moral Philosophy” course that one might choose to enroll in.

5.3 BENEFICENT OBSTINACY

Lewis does not respond to the defects of modern education by offering a grand solution that would entirely fix it on a global scale. To look at *The Abolition of Man* as that type of treatise misses its point. Lewis understands that counteracting the methods of modern education with another method would be fruitless and contradictory. Instead, the applicable principles of Lewis’s rhetoric and philosophy of education are for people to put into practice on a local level. For Lewis, it remains the responsibility of children and parents, students and teachers to deliberately reject the amorality of modern education and to participate in principles of moral education. The contemporary educational predicament differs from that of traditional education because of the reality that, at

present, a collective belief in objective value no longer endures. Lewis contrasts modern education with traditional education so that we can see where the problems are, but simply returning to the ways of the past does not really offer a contemporary solution to these problems. Lewis thinks the ways of the past can help us see where we have gone astray in order to develop original solutions.

Lewis claims that responses to grandiose educational agendas have always come from practical individuals at the grassroots level. For example, Lewis depicts Plato as a premodern representative who shows sincere interest in moral education, but this does not make Plato immune to theoretical missteps, which must be adjusted by those who are more practically minded. As Lewis explains,

Hitherto the plans of educationalists have achieved very little of what they attempted and indeed, when we read them—how Plato would have every infant ‘a bastard nursed in a bureau’ . . . we may well thank the beneficent obstinacy of real mothers, real nurses, and (above all) real children for preserving the human race in such sanity as it still possesses. (60)

Lewis believes that modern education, if left unchecked by the beneficent obstinacy of real people, will increasingly become the province of “the man-moulders of the new age” because they hold the “powers of an omniscient state and an irresistible scientific technique” (60). Lewis concedes that the solutions to problems brought about through the scientism of modern education and its reliance upon method and technique needs real science to remain intact. Lewis even considers it possible that “from Science herself the cure might come” (76), but the cure requires real scientists who are willing to engage in “reconsideration, and something like repentance” (78). Lewis believes that real scientists

need to seek public repentance on behalf of the colleagues of theirs who have substituted the love of knowledge for the love of power, and for thus allowing science to become scientism.

The question of power becomes central to our present discussion of modern education because Lewis believes that power, not knowledge, illustrates the determining factor of the research questions that modern science pursues. In *God, Philosophy, Universities*, Alasdair MacIntyre picks up on this as well, stating, “The directions taken by research are . . . generally not dictated by researchers, but by those who supply their funding—and what gets funded depends on a variety of intellectual, economic, and political interests” (173). MacIntyre identifies that as a result of funding various sets of interests have power over the research questions that modern research universities are even allowed to ask. Since these are the same universities that many consider to be the public storehouses of knowledge, one sees that a dilemma arises. By design scientism alleges that its techniques and methods have objective accessibility to knowledge. It makes its own system the one right test of knowledge, and renders public opinion as merely subjective. It asks reasoning publics to release the function of determining knowledge to its control, all under the guise that its results are democratic and not subject to manipulation. Scientism claims to provide us with hard facts that are not subject to emotional appeals. However, Lewis understands that when public reasoning abandons its role as the guardian of common sense in the name of democracy, that which takes its place looks suspiciously undemocratic.

According to Thomas Kuhn in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, in matters pertaining to the human life-world the objective knowledge that supposedly emerges

from the disinterested application of scientific technique and method is actually the result of prior convictions and interpretations. Kuhn explains that “methodological directives” alone do not offer objective scientific conclusions; rather, a scientist educated in a particular way arrives at conclusions that are “probably determined by his prior experience in other fields” (4). Furthermore, since “Observation and experience can and must drastically restrict the range of admissible scientific belief” (4), Kuhn describes scientific research as the “strenuous and devoted attempt to force nature into the conceptual boxes supplied by professional education” (5). In all of this Kuhn seeks not to depreciate the practice of science, rather, by offering insight into how it actually works, he hopes to demolish pretensions that hinder its ability to function properly.

It would make sense for us to consider what these prior convictions and interpretations of the human life-world are from those who play such a predominant role in determining what counts as knowledge for the majority. From the perspective of Lewis, these scientific convictions and interpretations get advanced under the guise of objectivity and at the expense of traditional convictions and interpretations. In other words, part of the force of technique and method grows out of the supposition that it imparts a democratic and reliable criterion of knowledge that exists outside of the particular interests of those in power. The techniques and methods of scientism present themselves as neutral sources that determine truth independent of human involvement, but paradoxically they require for their functionality the very thing they purportedly move beyond. Buying into the educational schema advanced by scientism forfeits traditional aspects of human involvement and existence, which determines knowledge and truth—the practical reason of *sensus communis*.

Through scientism modern education assumes that traditional beliefs are erroneous without disproving them according to practical reason. Because certain aspects of traditional beliefs and convictions fall outside of the purview of scientism it gives its adherents the supposed ground to ignore it. Once allegiance has been given to scientism its devotees do not require that areas of knowledge outside its purview be shown false through practical reason. Thus, complete trust in technique and method, through the myth of scientism, makes a modern type of reasoning possible whereby traditional beliefs are rendered naïve and discounted without the prerequisite of practical argumentative support. Lewis understands that modern education diminishes the legitimate premodern habit that uses practical reason to assess and discard harmful ideas. In the essay “Bulverism,” Lewis provides an example of how differently this process now works in contemporary times:

[Y]ou must show *that* a man is wrong before you start explaining *why* he is wrong. The modern method is to assume without discussion *that* he is wrong and then distract his attention from this (the only real issue) by busily explaining how he became to be so silly. (273)

This modern method of argumentation illustrates how practical reason gets undermined while purporting to be reasonable, or, to say it another way, it depends upon reason to refute reason.

Modern education altogether abandons practical reason as an agreed upon criterion for assessing knowledge in public discourse. Modern education equates reason with scientific technique, and the cultural buy-in has been so successful that many contemporary intellectuals who critique scientism often reject reason as well. Thus, the

only court of appeal for determining knowledge remains the prior commitments of groups with financial power, and in the modern research university, “the only points of view that are allowed full academic credence are those that presuppose purely naturalistic worldviews” (Marsden, *Soul* 430). For those intellectuals who assume the veracity of naturalism as a given while refuting traditional accounts of reality, they are simply engaging in bulverism. In this fashion, as Marsden explains, naturalism “is not a conclusion of modern scientific thought, but rather an often useful methodological premise. As a claim about reality, however, exclusivist naturalism is unsubstantiated and unfalsifiable” (431).

Although naturalistic accounts of reality cannot be verified through scientific method and technique, it nonetheless receives assent by proponents of modern education. Ironically, this assent resembles the same degree of faith that many offer as the very reason for rejecting traditional viewpoints. Modern education rejects faith perspectives from the public sphere because they are unfalsifiable; however, we are now in a position to see an inherent hypocrisy of this procedure. For Marsden there happens to be no intellectual reason for refusing traditional perspectives of reality in educational endeavors as long as they maintain rigorous academic standards. Instead, rejections of traditional viewpoints are often engaged in for other reasons. According to Marsden,

One of the strongest current motives for discriminating in academia even against traditional religious viewpoints that play within the procedural rules of universities is that many advocates of such viewpoints are prone to be conservative politically and to hold views regarding lifestyle, the family, or sexuality that may be offensive to powerful groups on

campuses. Hence in the name of tolerance, pluralism, and diversity academic expressions of such religious perspectives may be discriminated against. (432)

As previously noted Marsden demonstrates how the ideas of tolerance, pluralism, and diversity, which presently find asylum within modern American universities, receive their original impetus as a result of the culture being predominantly Christian. That is, the general force of Christian values that is at the foundation of the American universities allows for the type of free inquiry that has made the modern research university possible. However, the religious perspectives that gave sanction to free inquiry in modern American universities are now ironically refused any involvement within intellectual discussion.

The values of traditional outlooks are excluded from public discourse in the name of tolerance, but certain values are still being covertly advanced. Only by ignoring the intellectual contributions of religious perspectives are alternative interests able to operate through the modern educational system. The modern university shapes the minds and hearts of our future leaders, and by presenting knowledge as amoral it undermines the bedrock of traditional belief. Technique and method makes procedural standardization an ultimate measure; thus, the variances that are inherent to the human life-world are automatically placed outside the purview of relevant knowledge. Through this pattern of thought the techniques and methods of scientism establish the criterion of knowledge and are able to set the intellectual agenda of the modern world. Its effect makes scientific certainty the only sure knowledge, thereby eliminating both wholesome doubt and the role of faith. The entire process is perpetuated through popular discourse, for as Lewis

notes, modern education and its harmful ideology “begins to affect our very language” (*Abolition* 74).

5.4 PUBLIC DISCOURSE

By supposedly operating independently of human beings, scientism uses method to marginalize the public role of reason and discourse. Wherever scientism shapes education it gives rise to institutional frameworks that make specialized knowledge literally unable to be challenged. In part, this story of modern education centers on the fragmentation of the disciplines, such that only experts who share the same worldview are in a position to understand, let alone critique, specialized information. Another equally compelling part of the story resides in the role that specialized language plays in the modern-scientific disciplines. In *The Human Condition*, Hannah Arendt describes the situation as follows: “The ‘truths’ of the modern scientific world view, though they can be demonstrated in mathematical formulas and proved technologically, will no longer lend themselves to normal expression in speech and thought” (3). Arendt continues,

[T]he situation created by the sciences is of great political significance.

Whenever the relevance of speech is at stake, matters become political by definition, for speech is what makes man a political being . . . the sciences today have been forced to adopt a “language” of mathematical symbols which, though it was originally meant only as an abbreviation for spoken statements, now contain statements that in no way can be translated back into speech. The reason why it may be wise to distrust the political

judgment of scientists *qua* scientists is . . . precisely the fact that they
move in a world where speech has lost its power. (3-4)

The problem for Arendt, much like Lewis, comes by way of the distancing of technical experts from the public sphere. These experts are supposedly able to operate within an amoral framework outside of language. However, they oversee the scientific advances that profoundly influence the whole complex of societal relations. With this in mind Lewis's rhetoric and philosophy of education suggests that we must teach and develop a citizenry that demands accountability and public discourse in areas of communal concern.

A first step in this direction occurs by learning to deliberately reject the ideas advanced through inaccurate or unintelligible language. Lewis identifies that scientism revises societal vocabulary in ways that reify its own epistemology. Lewis defends the accuracy and intelligibility of language in the public sphere because he realizes that the democratic functions of public discourse atrophy wherever speech and language are irrelevant to action. In "Screwtape Proposes a Toast," Lewis explains how the "corruption of human language" (197) serves the purposes of hell as it becomes integrated with the modern educational system. For instance, Lewis depicts the way this works in practice by considering how modern education helps blur the term *democracy* so that it ends up meaning "I'm as good as you." As Lewis states, "The basic principle of the new education is to be that dunces and idlers must not be made to feel inferior to intelligent and industrious pupils. That would be 'undemocratic'" (203). Lewis believes that the corruption of language represents a key feature of the modern education that inevitably serves diabolical ends.

The “corruption of human language” that Lewis refers to subsists as another consequence of scientific technique. The passage that permits this interpretation appears in the second chapter of *The Abolition of Man*, where Lewis uses a discussion of language to illuminate and characterize differences in general standards of criticism. Significantly and by design, this passage occurs in a context where Lewis differentiates value advancement from value innovation. According to Lewis,

A theorist about language may approach his native tongue, as it were from outside, regarding its genius as a thing that has no claim on him and advocating wholesale alterations of its idiom and spelling in the interests of commercial convenience or scientific accuracy. That is one thing. A great poet, who has ‘loved, and been well nurtured in, his mother tongue’, may also make great alterations in it, but his changes of the language are made in the spirit of the language itself: he works from within. The language which suffers, has also inspired the changes. That is a different thing—as different as the works of Shakespeare are from Basic English. It is the difference between alteration from within and alteration from without: between the organic and the surgical. (45)

By placing his discussion of language criticism directly in the context of value assessment, Lewis intends to conjure a connection between language and value theory. Simply put, Lewis asserts that meaning gets lost when words lack an agreed upon accuracy in describing their subject area. Lewis’s reference to “Basic English” emerges as a deliberate appraisal of I. A. Richards’s *Basic English and Its Uses*. The distaste Lewis has for this text appears obvious enough, and his general distaste for Richard’s

corpus in general has already been presented in view of the fact that the lessons from *The Green Book* derive from *The Meaning of Meaning* by C. K. Ogden and Richards.

The language theory that Lewis combats in *The Abolition of Man* matches the referential theory of meaning as developed by Ogden and Richards. The basic implications of this theory transpire through the misinformed idea that scientific language provides direct access to the objective meaning that exists in nature, whereas rhetorical language merely provides emotive and subjective meaning since it resides in the mind of an individual. Lewis recognizes that Richards's language theory suggests that only science can adequately explain reality, an assumption that inevitably, yet tacitly, undermines traditional perspectives of ethics, philosophy, and metaphysics. In opposition to this view Lewis presents a phenomenological account of language that highlights the importance of the public precision of language usage for humanity's ability to interpret reality. Lewis understands that our perceptions of reality come through lived experience, not through the application of a scientific technique. Only through language is one able to assign meaning to one's experience; thus, language supplies the ground for meaning.

The Abolition of Man supports the idea that one experiences reality through language, precisely the same language that one uses to define and articulate reality. Therefore, the scientific discourse that influences works like *The Green Book* or Richards's *Basic English* alters our perceptions of reality by narrowing the role of language and suggesting that sentimental language is merely artificial. According to the authors of *The Green Book*, when we use value-charged language it refers only to inward experience, for "we appear to be saying something very important about something: and

actually we are only saying something about our own feelings” (3). Lewis points out that much of what happens to a person who accepts a statement like this occurs unconsciously, for it remains likely that neither the authors nor the schoolchild will consciously apply this statement as “a general philosophical theory that all values are subjective and trivial” (5). However, Lewis recognizes that it suggests that subject matter without a referent in the material world, such as values, thoughts, and feelings, is merely words and empty rhetoric.

The move that occurs here happens subtly, but it suggests that since values, thoughts, and feelings are immaterial (and therefore unimportant), then the language used to describe these concepts makes no difference either. Thus, both the subject matter and the language used to describe them are mere names that cannot be considered objective like the scientific language that accounts for the visual realm. This exemplifies how modern education assigns objectivity to the knowledge that comes through science and the visual realm while making the knowledge of values, thoughts, and feeling, along with the words used to describe these concepts, equally subjective. Modern education conflates traditional values with the language used to define them, and stays equally suspicious of both. It provides its own methods as the only reliable criterion for arriving at truth. This move gives the appearance of stability in light of the meager status it assigns to language.

5.5 TRAINING EMOTION

Lewis’s rhetoric and philosophy of education offers another central educational alternative when we think through what training emotion means in our contemporary

historical moment. In *The Discarded Image*, Lewis explains, “In every period the Model of the Universe which is accepted by the great thinkers helps to provide what we may call a backcloth for the arts” (14). In the past this backcloth was “intelligible to a layman” and “appeal[ed] to imagination and emotion” (14). Lewis believes that modern education produces men without chests by devaluing the role of emotion, while traditional education produces the converse: men with chests. For Lewis, the chest symbolizes the human heart that functions as the seat of emotions and sentiments. Recalling *The Green Book* in the early pages of *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis gives a stark depiction of how modern education diminishes the role of emotion in learning. Lewis supports the merits of traditional literature and its beneficial role in eliciting emotional responses, whereas the authors of *The Green Book* are suspicious and dismissive of any literature that has emotional appeals. Alongside his critique Lewis also offers a practical example of a constructive lesson that educators of literature should employ in the classroom: “A lesson which had laid such literature beside the advertisement and really discriminated the good from the bad would have been a lesson worth teaching. There would have been some blood and sap in it—the trees of knowledge and of life growing together” (7).

Lewis believes that in our age educators must assist their pupils in the development of appropriate emotional responses, not ignore the whole enterprise outright. The authors of *The Green Book* probably believe they are enlightening their pupils and making them immune to emotional propaganda by rendering all sentiments unreasonable. However, Lewis knows that in such an educational undertaking the opposite happens since immunity to such things comes through developing one’s emotional capacity, not ignoring it. As he states,

The right defence against false sentiments is to inculcate just sentiments. By starving the sensibility of our pupils we only make them easier prey to the propagandist when he comes. For famished nature will be avenged and a hard heart is no infallible protection against a soft head. (14)

Even if the authors of *The Green Book* thought education should build some aspects of traditional sentiment while debunking others, Lewis maintains, “it is the ‘debunking’ side of their work, and this side alone, which will really tell” (14).

Lewis aligns with the premodern rhetorical tradition because he sees that training in right sentiment acts as an important antidote against harmful sentiments and the method of debunking value. To banish discussion of appropriate sentiment from education not only makes the pupil “easier prey,” but it also gives the false impression that logic alone provides everything necessary for one to be adequately prepared for responding to situations that require action. Lewis helps us to appreciate that if there is ever a time when youths are overly-sentimental that time is not now: “For every one pupil who needs to be guarded from a weak excess of sensibility there are three who need to be awakened from the slumber of cold vulgarity. The task of the modern educator is not to cut down jungles but to irrigate deserts” (13). Inevitably, discussions of “right sentiment” imply a shared belief in objective value. This disposition remains unpopular in the modern university, but is nonetheless shared by virtually all premodern societies. With an objective order in mind, Lewis asserts, “emotional states can be in harmony with reason (when we feel liking for what ought to be approved) or out of harmony with reason (when we perceive that liking is due but cannot feel it)” (19). For Lewis, a belief in objective value provides the ground necessary for one to think of emotions as

reasonable or unreasonable. Since objective value remains excluded from the outset in the modern educational system, it divides fact from feeling and makes training in right sentiment appear nonsensical.

In *Orators & Philosophers*, Bruce Kimball comments that a general distrust of rhetorical education inescapably relates to the belief that it gives precedence to “emotional appeals rather than logical analysis [as] the basis of moral suasion” (26). As we have seen, however, key representatives of the premodern rhetorical tradition, such as Isocrates, Cicero, and St. Augustine, have never given primacy to sentiment over reason. Instead, these representatives understand that these human faculties must work together. In general, the disciplines of the liberal arts allow for a healthy tension among emotional and logical appeals, and while the former has been deemphasized at certain times and places it has never been outright discarded as in the milieu of modern education. While representatives of the premodern philosophical tradition might distrust excessive reliance upon emotional appeals, Lewis reminds us of what Plato makes clear, “As the king governs by his executive, so Reason in man must rule the mere appetites by means of the ‘spirited element’ [emotion]” (24). Thus, acting upon our desires requires a mixture of emotion and reason.

Lewis rejects the attempt and possibility of logically proving the reality of objective value, but that does not make objective reality illogical or any less crucial because in any case it operates apart from our conscious belief and recognition of it. The appendix to *The Abolition of Man* offers several examples of how objective value finds expression across various traditions and cultures. Lewis understands that the relative consistency of these values across time and space does not adequately prove their reality

for skeptics; instead, they are simply illustrations of the natural law in operation. Again, more than anything else, Lewis exhorts us to not be fooled by those who debunk traditional values:

A great many of those who ‘debunk’ traditional or (as they would say) ‘sentimental’ values have in the background values of their own which they believe to be immune from the debunking process. They claim to be cutting away the parasitic growth of emotion, religious sanction, and inherited taboos, in order that ‘real’ or ‘basic’ values may emerge. (29)

In modern education traditional values are distrusted, among other reasons, because of their emotional significance, but Lewis shows us that the values being propagated in their stead cannot be enacted apart from the sentiment that the *Tao* provides. Those who debunk the feelings that stem from sentimental values believe that the facts of pure reason are sufficient to provide motivation for one to act accordingly. To reiterate, Lewis asserts that, on the contrary, “from propositions about fact alone no *practical* conclusion can ever be drawn” (31).

Lewis realizes that sentimental values are inextricably connected to practical reason, so to discard a value because it has an emotional impact upon one’s faculty of judgment simultaneously abandons rational behavior. For Lewis, human beings are never more rational than when they allow their judgments and emotions to be influenced by the *Tao*, and it would be futile to look for a system of values beyond sentiment since all values are sentimental and ultimately derive from the *Tao*. Lewis rejects the notion that one might find the motivation to act virtuously apart from sentiment—the very thing modern education diminishes. According to Lewis, an authentic education must teach the

pupil how to act, think, and feel rationally. That feelings can be true or false indicates an important implication of objective value, for it means that feelings play a necessary role in testing public knowledge through practical rationality (*phronēsis*) and common sense (*sensus communis*). Lewis perceives that human sentiment embodies another crucial adjunct for determining whether or not ideas, as well as their human representatives, are reasonable in what they are persuading us to do and/or believe.

Through a combination of *sensus communis* and natural law Lewis understands that sentiments are both learned and received. In this way Lewis supports the outlook of Cicero's idea of "mental emotion" as depicted in his *De oratore* (Book 2, 44xliv). Cicero sees the necessity and inherent relationship among emotion and thought for inciting action. In the context of public discourse and education, Cicero implies that the "mental emotions" of the tribunal members can be in accord with one another as to the right way to feel and act, an insight that parallels Lewis's description of the distinctive premodern educational motive, "men transmitting manhood to men" (*Abolition* 23).

5.6 EDUCATION AND FAITH

In an especially insightful article titled "Christianity and Culture," Lewis presents his basic posture toward the relationship of the Christian faith and culture. In particular, the conversation centers on whether or not the pursuit of liberal education introduces itself as a Christian duty and virtue. Lewis sets out to discover how intellectual pursuit and liberal education might be warranted from the Christian perspective. He offers the first justification through the simple fact that, in general, liberal education arranges for career opportunities that many Christians are well-suited for. In this context, Lewis

recognizes the Biblical charge from the epistle of Ephesians (4:28), which calls Christians to work at something good. This initial support of culture, and by extension intellectual pursuit, seems to stand on the claim that culture must be inherently harmless. Although Lewis rejects this by claiming that culture “certainly can be harmful and often is” (20), he reaches the conclusion that “The abuse of culture is already there, and will continue whether Christians cease to be cultured or not. It is therefore probably better that the ranks of the ‘culture-sellers’ should include some Christians—as an antidote” (20). Furthermore, Lewis considers certain elements of culture, like liberal learning, as potential sources of pleasure, which Christians should be able to enjoy with God’s approval.

Lewis contemplates, lastly, the extent to which intellectual pursuit of liberal education for the Christian can be justified alongside competing accounts of value. Lewis recognizes that some of the recurring values in European literature, such as honor or sexual love, have the tendency to be beneath Christian values and certainly are not equivalent. Yet, he does not believe they are to be discouraged by Christians on this account. Lewis thinks of these values as “sub-Christian,” or “the highest level of merely natural value lying immediately below the lowest level of spiritual value” (22). Lewis understands that these sub-Christian values are *like*, but not the same as, Christian values. As he states, “though ‘like is not the same,’ it is better than unlike. Imitation may pass into initiation. For some it is a good beginning.” (23). More to the point, especially from the perspective of this project, Lewis describes how liberal education has the potential to complement one’s faith perspectives, whereas the contemporary plight of those uneducated in the liberal arts tends to be narrow:

Popularized science, the conventions or “unconventions” of his immediate circle, party programmes, etc., enclose him in a tiny windowless universe which he mistakes for the only possible universe. There are no distant horizons, no mysteries. He thinks everything has been settled. A cultured person, on the other hand, is almost compelled to be aware that reality is very odd and that the ultimate truth, whatever it may be, must have the characteristics of strangeness—*must* be something that would seem remote and fantastic to the uncultured. (23)

Thus, according to Lewis, liberal education has the capacity to enlarge the world of those without faith, an enlargement that exposes false thinking. The values advanced through liberal education are not necessarily Christian outright, but Lewis perceives that they are not outright incompatible with them either—as the values of modern education frequently are.

Modern education takes no account of faith perspectives as legitimate sources of knowledge. Lewis realizes that absolutely ignoring faith-based knowing in public educational systems, regardless of one’s faith commitment, causes one to lose touch with an important part of human identity—an identity essential to call oneself human. As a Christian Theist Lewis does not make an apologetic claim for his faith alone; rather, he shows his concern for all faiths and traditional moral codes known to humanity. Lewis thinks that modern education makes knowledge too bland and literal. It renders premodern beliefs as silliness, regardless of how important and meaningful those “silly” traditions are to those who continue to engage in them.

Lewis's rhetoric and philosophy of education does not contend that everyone in academia today needs to engage faith as the primary source of intellectual inquiry. Rather, Lewis simply wants its legitimacy to be recognized by those who have assumed it an untenable pursuit from the outset because of the cultural influence that excludes belief. As Marsden claims,

Today, almost all religious groups, no matter what their educational credentials, are on the outside of this educational establishment, or soon will be, if present trends continue. Americans who are concerned for justice ought to be open to considering alternatives. (*Soul* 440)

Modern education's institutional hypocrisy, as evidenced in this context, excludes the tolerance of religious belief within academic pursuit in the name of tolerance. By uncovering the fallacy of scientism and evaluating the shortcomings of its present reign in academia, Lewis hopes that scholars with any inclination to pursue questions that fall within the purview of faith will see that knowledge of this sort has never been disproven and represents positions that are intellectually sound.

5.7 EPISTEMOLOGICAL PREDISPOSITION

Lewis understands that modern education's morally vacuous features are due to the epistemological predisposition it makes available. The epistemological predisposition of modern education manifests itself in several ways that make the recovery of traditional views of value and virtue hard to achieve. Lewis explores the pretenses upon which the entire modern educational system stands, and shares what he foresees as the practical results of such a system for society and the future of the human race. In a fashion that

resembles the premodern rhetorical tradition, Lewis does not piece an argument together to prove the reality of objective value. Rather, he articulates that a belief in objective value must exist in order for any coherent moral argument to even be possible. Lewis discloses the inherent hypocrisy of the modern educational system, for after it debunks or ignores traditional values, it posits values of its own that it believes are immune from the debunking process.

The ideals of the premodern rhetorical tradition are not permitted into the contemporary educational fold because they are represented as dogmatic, elitist, and oppressive. Lewis picks up on the irony, for by rejecting traditional educational perspectives as preserved through the premodern rhetorical tradition, in the name of oppressiveness we have substituted the authority of persons for the authority of a man-made method. Thus, modern education's liberation from tradition results in its confinement to method, and the ideals advanced through rhetorical education may very well be the only possible antidote to the present predicament.

Recalling our earlier discussion of the historical dichotomy between the educational ideals of the premodern rhetorical tradition on one hand and the philosophical tradition on the other, we are able to extract a different basic predisposition that drives each. The premodern rhetorical tradition represents a basic disposition of faith, or uncritical belief, in a variety of senses not exclusively religious, whereas the endless speculation of the philosophical tradition eventually births universal doubt. At present, the latter of these holds sway in the modern educational system. From this standpoint modern education teaches its pupils to doubt the truth of everything that comes from a

human source; yet, the structures that make this continual critique possible are themselves a human creation.

The implications inherent to adopting one of these dispositions, faith or doubt, are widespread and represent compelling educational assumptions. Importantly, however, both dispositions require an initial degree of faith before their educational goals can be achieved, for one does not move into valuing doubt as an educational predisposition without first choosing to believe that this method contains inherent value. Once a person adopts this step of faith it must be continually reaffirmed through devotion to the results it achieves, results that are often aligned with a predisposition of faith in the inherent goodness of scientific and technological progress.

Since either predisposition requires a degree of faith, tangible results are lifted up as confirmation for the modern stance, but again, taking its results as inherently valuable displays a prior commitment. In a strange sense modern education attempts to persuade us that its methods are natural and beyond challenge, for modern education would have us believe that to challenge its methods would be to challenge knowledge itself. That its advances in science and technology have extended life and produced more comfort are the results it offers to prove that it represents the true path; yet, these results must be simultaneously accepted, through faith, as inherently good and inevitable apart from human choice. Lewis helps to see that these scientific advances are good, but good in the sense offered by the *Tao*, because when we ask why it is good to heal the sick and give comfort to the poor we are brought back to the justifications that are precisely the teachings of the *Tao*.

Understanding the inherent hypocrisies within modern education becomes easier when we interpret them from the perspective allowed through the premodern rhetorical tradition. As a historical phenomenon the premodern rhetorical tradition affords us an important perspective for studying the implications of modern education. In this fashion Walter Ong states,

As we have come to understand it more, the rhetorical tradition has thrown light not merely on the past but almost equally on the present, for it has enabled us better to see the significance of the shifts in media and in modes of knowledge storage and retrieval which have both resulted from and produced our present technological age. The ancient rhetoricians were the first media buffs. Study of the rhetorical tradition enables us to interpret the past on its own terms and thus to discover many of the real roots out of which the present grows. (*Rhetoric* viii)

The “shifts in media” that Ong refers to illuminate the story of this project and run concurrent with the educational predicament Lewis tells of in *The Abolition of Man*. These shifts have displaced the traditional economy of thought known to virtually all premodern societies, a structure of thought that has an epistemological predisposition toward belief and conservation of received knowledge through public deliberation. With the introduction of doubt as the favored posture of educational knowledge the traditional objective values of the *Tao* have become a private affair.

This tension between uncritical belief and doubt as epistemological postures of learning represent a reality of the human condition and mirrors the fundamental tensions between rhetoric and philosophy. When this tension operates in a healthy fashion neither

side takes precedence to the exclusion of the other. However, since the principle of universal doubt currently holds sway in modern education, it makes doubting our way to certainty axiomatic. In *Personal Knowledge*, Michael Polanyi recognizes the innate absurdity of an educational system that would make the test of knowledge entirely void of uncritical belief:

If we cannot accept the justification of holding beliefs uncritically, then our only logical alternative is to wipe out all such preconceived beliefs. . . . We must accept the virgin mind, bearing the imprint of no authority, as the model of intellectual integrity. . . . It [the virgin mind] must be taught no language, for speech can be acquired only a-critically, and the practice of speech in one particular language carries with it the acceptance of the particular theory of the universe postulated by that language. (295)

Of course, Polanyi speaks tongue-in-cheek here because he knows the logical outcome of such a system would be impossible. The entire enterprise of modern education rests on false premises, for we see that the very process of language acquisition, the foundation of all education, rests upon a posture that is a-critical. Ironically, that which gives human beings the ability to be critical is itself a-critical, but Polanyi thinks he understands the true intentions of those who advocate for an educational system founded upon the principle of universal doubt:

They want their own beliefs to be taught to children and accepted by everybody, for they are convinced that this would save the world from error and strife. . . . Philosophic doubt is thus kept on the leash and

prevented from calling in question anything that the [skeptic] believes in,
or from approving of any doubt that he does not share. (297)

Like Polanyi, Lewis reaches a strikingly similar conclusion when considering the ways in which universal doubt is actually carried out in practice. By thinking alongside Lewis, one sees that a program like universal doubt receives momentum because under its scrutiny values cannot prove themselves with any degree of certainty. Ultimately, Lewis shows us that for many propagators of modern education, “Their scepticism about values is on the surface: it is for use on other people’s values; about the values current in their own set they are not nearly sceptical enough” (*Abolition* 29).

5.8 CONCLUSION

Lewis would be perpetuating a fallacy of modernity if he were to offer some type of mass program to change education; instead, he returns us to the ideals of the past. Thus, we find that Lewis’s educational alternatives are old, not new. His alternatives are essential for *sensus communis* to once again serve as the medium by which knowledge receives admission into the lives of human beings. Lewis believes that human beings, not a method, are the best judges of knowledge and truth. *Sensus communis* calls for the practical reason that does not require certainty but will humbly accept probable knowledge in human affairs, for probable knowledge is powerful and good. The objective value of the intellectual virtue, practical reason (*phronēsis*), provides the foundation for the premodern rhetorical tradition, but the worth of this virtue simply cannot be proven according to the scientific standards which now dominate education. It

exists as something that one embraces for its own sake, for without it the very foundation of reason crumbles.

Throughout the pages of *The Abolition of Man* Lewis aligns with the premodern rhetorical tradition in several ways. Lewis understands that the form by which we educate our children ultimately impacts the future of humankind. Lewis pleads with us to return to a form of education that inculcates a commitment to identifiable virtues that reside “from time immemorial in the *Tao*” (40). Through that body of classical texts and sayings the *Tao* relays objective values that must be accepted and practiced uncritically. As a starting point, Lewis’s rhetoric and philosophy of education tells us that we must take individual responsibility in order for the ideals of the premodern rhetorical tradition to again take root. It takes students, teachers, children, and parents deciding daily to articulate their ideas publicly and with precision, while practicing beneficent obstinacy in the face of an educational system that advances false premises in areas where it has no legitimate sanction. Lewis believes that education can be restored through ordinary people who will once again make learning a virtuous practice in the home, the nursery, and the classroom. Ordinary people can restore the integrity of humankind as beings that transmit and receive knowledge through interdependent faculties of the body, the mind, and the heart.

Lewis downplays his Christian faith perspective in *The Abolition of Man*, but we ignore the significance of it for our textual interpretation at our peril. The premodern rhetorical tradition requires that both teacher and student submit themselves to the writings and sayings of the past. Nevertheless, truth does not reside in the texts; instead, truth “emerges through the disciplined effort to understand and express the meaning of

the texts” (Kimball, *Orators* 238). When we consider each of the faith traditions that Lewis honors through inclusion in *The Abolition of Man*, we would be remiss to overlook the last passage in the appendix that makes reference to the Law of Magnanimity:

“Verily, verily I say to you unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone, but if it dies it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it” (John 12:24, 25).

Lewis ends his dynamic text by emphasizing that aspect of the natural law that stresses our role and responsibility to others, not the self. The title of the text we have reviewed throughout this project, *The Abolition of Man*, is precisely what happens when value-free education captivates the hearts and minds of the next generation. Lewis’s educational alternatives require humble enactment by ordinary people with magnanimous intentions, for the benefits that come with going against the grain of modern education can hardly be considered this-worldly.

For this reason I find it fitting that Lewis’s rhetoric and philosophy of education aligns so seamlessly with a distinctly Augustinian educational perspective. For Lewis and Augustine alike, the Christian educator stands in a position whereby his or her vocation could be appropriately termed a calling. By following in the Augustinian tradition Lewis sees the value of the liberal arts for people of all faith perspectives.

Overall, Lewis’s rhetoric and philosophy agrees with the great Augustinian declaration:

If those who are called philosophers, especially the Platonists, have said things which are indeed true and are well accommodated to our faith, they should not be feared; rather, what they have said should be taken from them as from unjust possessors and converted to our use. Just as the Egyptians had not only idols and grave burdens which the people of Israel

detested and avoided, so also they had vases and ornaments of gold and silver and clothing which the Israelites took with them secretly when they fled, as if to put them to a better use. They did not do this on their own authority but at God's commandment, while the Egyptians unwittingly supplied them with things which they themselves did not use well.

Including, liberal disciplines more suited to the uses of truth, and some most useful precepts concerning morals. (*On Christian Doctrine* II.xl.60)

Lewis's rhetoric and philosophy of education shows the currency of Augustine's position and allows us to apply it in ways that are applicable to our moment. In our day, taking the spoils of the Egyptians to serve God's purposes continues to mean that all truth, whether in the sciences or the humanities, is God's truth. The intellectual snobbery of modern education makes the premodern rhetorical tradition outdated because of its failure to fit into the conceptual boxes that scientism advances. Thus, important areas of truth are falling out of view, and because of this Lewis sees that the very essence of human *being* crumbles away with it. Through their neglect, distinctly human characteristics pertaining to choice, reason, judgment, and dialogue have already begun to atrophy. This atrophy works alongside the atrophy of the human heart, something that all faith perspectives should be concerned with as the character of modern humankind gradually takes on the characteristics of an impersonal machine. As the pages of this interpretive project have argued, *The Abolition of Man* calls ordinary people to deliberately discredit, in season and out of season, the principles of modern education that undermine the integrity of faith and reason. By enacting Lewis's educational

alternatives, which align with the premodern rhetorical tradition, we take a step in that direction.

EPILOGUE

The Abolition of Man operates as a rhetoric and philosophy of education that provides compelling principles for contemporary scholars to practically apply in various ways across academia. To avoid others marginalizing the text as a type of Christian manifesto, Lewis emphasizes the common ground that virtually all premodern civilizations share—a belief in natural law, or objective value. By making this move Lewis announces his belief that the problems presented by scientism are not of concern for Christians only, but for the entire human race. To this end, Lewis’s educational principles are also interrelated with, and have implications for, the honorable institutions of the family, the Church, and the government. Each of these institutions has a distinct role, and Lewis believes that in order for a culture to remain healthy, educational institutions should function alongside each of the others—not undermine them. For us to genuinely enact Lewis’s alternatives to modern education, we must figure out what the proper balance and role of each institution should be in the educational process.

Throughout this project we have looked at the corrupting influence of scientism as it continues to work its way into higher education. If it remains unchecked, Lewis predicts that scientism will result in humanity’s abolition, an abolition of human *essence*, not necessarily human existence. Although Lewis respects the proper work and scope of science, he understands that all too often it becomes conflated with scientism. Therefore, teaching and learning how to distinguish real science from scientism appears as an essential educational imperative for our historical moment—a hermeneutical task that suits the learning one receives within a liberal arts education. However, the only motive for learning how to distinguish science from scientism comes through the conviction that

the effects of scientism are harmful. To supply such a motive Lewis raises awareness of scientism's ultimate end—the loss of human essence. Lewis argues that scientism erodes human essence through modern education that undermines the premodern imperative of deliberately developing “men with chests” according to the dictates of the natural law. If the chest, or heart, functions as the seat of all that makes us distinctly human—will, desire, emotion, motivation, action—then perhaps the cause of its deterioration will alarm a widespread audience.

The first antidote against such corruption occurs in the home, not the school. That private education persists as an unattainable goal for scores of families need not cause overwhelming despair, for a child's educational foundation rests upon the ongoing and deliberate involvement of their guardians in the home. This remains the first and most crucial step toward becoming inoculated against the harmful effects of modern education. Next, the *Tao* assumes the vital role of churches or other faith communities in enacting Lewis's educational alternatives. By relying upon religious texts throughout *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis establishes a remarkable link between education and faith. The Christian Church, in both its Protestant and Catholic traditions, as well as other faith communities that parallel it, are distinctive institutions with a different agenda than many private liberal arts colleges and universities. However, since more than a few liberal arts colleges and universities have identities that are directly tied to specific religious traditions or denominations, the goals of each effectively cooperate with one another most of the time. Both the family and faith communities are essential for the educational process as they assist in developing practices, interests, habits, motives, and discipline. Ultimately, in the context of this project, modern education's main bedfellow turns out to

be the institution of government. For Lewis, the major implications of this marriage would not be incredibly relevant “unless all education became state education. But it will” (“Screwtape Proposes” 205). This connection must be explored further in order for the broad enactment of Lewis’s rhetoric and philosophy of education to be possible.

It seems fairly certain from the perspective of Lewis that the principles of learning should come from society’s citizens and that government should have very little involvement in determining the philosophical underpinnings of education. Instead, due to various avenues of funding and accreditation, governmental bodies do have a profound influence over public and private institutions of learning in our time. Governmental involvement within academia begins with public educational systems from kindergarten through high school all the way up to public research universities. Since religious viewpoints, and by extension arguments for objective value, are often imagined as divisive, they are given certain boundaries that they cannot cross in modern classrooms. But, as suggested throughout this project, a belief in objective value serves as the bedrock for the freedoms that democratic society requires. Since traditional viewpoints of objective value are predominately sustained within faith communities today, voices like these are essential for counteracting and exposing modern education’s alliance with governmental agencies that prescribe what constitutes knowledge.

In a democracy the secular realm remains imperative to the proper functioning of society. Lewis recognizes the inherent perils of any state-imposed education and viewpoint—particularly a religious one. Therefore, for Lewis, the solution to the marginalization of faith-informed perspectives in academia comes not by imagining them in a place of prominence; rather, true democracy takes place by including these faith

perspectives as part of the conversation within the secular realm. Most contemporary Protestant and Catholic liberal arts institutions exemplify this spirit of democracy by studying secular viewpoints for their genuine insights. However, as Marsden explains in *The Soul of the American University*, the structures of public research institutions in this country make space for the inclusion of faith-based perspectives only at the most marginal levels. Faith-based worldviews are invited into the fold as long as their meaning and relevance are interpreted from a secular standpoint—that is, as human creations. As an educational principle, scholars with varying viewpoints, but who yet believe in academic freedom and democracy, should support the intellectual expression of how faith shapes experience and understanding in all areas of learning. Nevertheless, for those who operate within the secular realm, one of the implications of giving a hearing to faith-based viewpoints means learning to navigate underlying moral injunctions. On this point, Lewis reminds us that the cardinal virtues—prudence, temperance, justice, and fortitude—are still necessary for democratic society and thus still have objective value for today. Because of this it seems doubtful that very many scholars within the secular realm that are open to democracy would object to the value of these virtues either, as they are essential to the functioning of the civic arena and the civil liberty of free speech. This common ground provides faith-based perspectives with a compelling entrance point for dialogue.

The ideals of the premodern rhetorical tradition, which Lewis implicitly advances, must make a difference at the level of government for it to have any relevance for us today. At present, we see that the cultural ideas that develop in our public institutions of higher learning not only impact and shape the government, but these ideas are reified and

justified through the enactment of laws and prohibitions that perpetuate a distinct worldview—scientism. The worldview of scientism and the problems that go with it still exist; they are not cultural artifacts that died out with insightful declarations of postmodern scholarship. Determining how to enter and impact the political sphere from a faith-based rhetorical perspective endures as valuable work that liberal arts institutions would do well to focus resources upon. It appears that, for Lewis, an important entrance point for scholars of this sort comes by dogmatically arguing from the ground of real democracy.

Challenging the methods and techniques of scientism presents no small task for rhetorical scholars operating from faith-based perspectives. The challenge becomes further complicated when coupled with the fact that many cultural Christians in this country ironically aligned themselves with these harmful principles in the early part of the twentieth century. However, by arguing for the essential role of *people* in determining the course of education, rhetorical scholars operating from faith-based perspectives have an invaluable entrance point into the hearts and minds of society. One finds common ground when the techniques and methods of scientism are exposed in clear vernacular language as a source of *tyranny*. Contemporary democratic society succumbs to tyranny when it obeys the impersonal dictates of scientism's human creations. Method and technique, in all their forms, are human creations. In our country the irresistibility of method and technique resides in the mistaken belief that they offer knowledge about human nature while aligning with democratic principles. In reality, Lewis reminds us that the methods and techniques of scientism operate tyrannically through the power of the officials who oversee the interpretations of their "results." Lewis offers a response to

this tyranny by relying upon the value of the democratic principle that holds, “no man or group of men is good enough to be trusted with uncontrolled power over others” (“Reply” 81).

Lewis believes that a theocracy represents the worst form of government, for the official within a theocracy “mistakes his own cruelty and lust of power and fear for the voice of Heaven,” and will therefore “torment us infinitely because he torments us with the approval of his own conscience and his better impulses appear to him as temptations” (81). Following Lewis’s perspective, the contemporary governmental glorification of the methods of scientism eerily resembles a theocracy. At present the status of modern education affords officials within governmental bodies the opportunity to silently endorse scientism as the final arbiter of reality and knowledge. This position reifies the authority of scientism within modern education, therefore giving all of its supporters a certain boldness to believe and “to say that he who attacks them attacks Intelligence” (*Abolition* 25). This creates challenges for faith-based rhetorical scholars within contemporary times because both conservative and liberal political parties adopt the platform of scientism whenever it suits their political aspirations. Since one can depend upon few allies when denouncing the methods of scientism within the political sphere, why should anyone bother raising the critique?

One of the benefits of Lewis’s rhetoric and philosophy of education, particularly from the distinctly Christian elements of the premodern rhetorical tradition, comes by way of the objective truth that we have a responsibility to our neighbor. Those who share educational convictions similar to Lewis have a responsibility to present the classical view of reality as represented within the premodern rhetorical tradition. Such a move

invites our neighbors into a conversation that unites human beings of all faith perspectives, as well as those who are without a faith but still value human freedom. Lewis recognizes the impossibility of a detached value-free interpretation of the human condition, but social science purports to be such an enterprise and receives sanction by the most powerful in government. Thus, human decision making becomes irrelevant when faced against the myth (unreflectively assented to) that social scientific “facts” must by definition operate without any interference so that the knowledge it “discovers” remains free to produce the inevitable. Since whatever facts it discovers must be, how can one decide for or against that which could not have been otherwise? Lewis understands that an educational system that shapes its society to unreflectively adopt the false philosophical position that makes scientific progress natural and inevitable opens the door to tyranny. To hold the position that whatever science “tells” us about human nature exists without question and therefore requires compliance presents consequences that faith-informed scholars working within the premodern rhetorical tradition can and should denounce.

The loss of human freedom represents the largest consequence of replacing the authority of tradition with that of method and technique. With tradition one obeys the authority of people, whereas with method and technique one directs their obedience to the authority of a supposedly impersonal force. In order to authentically direct our obedience according to either pathway’s prescriptions of duty and moral obligation we must believe in that authority as valuable for its own sake, which presents a choice that falls within the purview of rhetoric and philosophy, not social science. Obeying an impersonal force would be like following a blind guide, but as we have seen the objectivity of method is an

illusion that actually places us at the mercy of the people who interpret the results of the method. As Neil Postman remarks in *Technopoly*, the results of social science are essentially a form of story-telling whereby its representatives make rhetorical and philosophical choices of how to relate its “findings” in a manner that corresponds to previous commitments. Faith-informed scholars working within the ideals of the premodern rhetorical tradition from a distinctly Christian worldview are obligated to raise these concerns, for they believe in the truth of the 155th Psalm:

Their idols are silver and gold,
the work of human hands.
They have mouths, but do not speak;
eyes, but do not see.
They have ears, but do not hear;
noses, but do not smell.
They have hands, but do not feel;
feet, but do not walk;
and they do not make a sound in their throat.
Those who make them become like them;
so do all who trust in them. (Ps. 115.4-8)

Because of his Christian faith perspective Lewis takes this verse to heart and believes that human beings inevitably become like that which they revere. Reverence and obedience to an impersonal force makes our society more bureaucratic and less democratic—the difference between less and more freedom.

In *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*, Marsden discusses the trivialization of faith-informed viewpoints across higher education. One would expect this trivialization to occur within public research universities, but the more interesting facet centers on the ways in which the secular standards of public research universities have become the standard bearers for excellence in scholarship across the board. Because of this, even many religiously affiliated liberal arts colleges follow the standards set by these institutions, standards that a priori divorce the compelling place of faith in discussions of scholarship. As Marsden explains,

While the religious heritage may be honored in various ways and celebrated in worship, a very different message is being sent in the classrooms. That message is that religion is really a private affair and that when it comes to the important things of life, such as understanding the world, our culture, other cultures, how you should make a living—matters that have to do with “the real world”—one should make no reference to beliefs that in other contexts are said to be ultimate. (105)

When looking at the modern classroom the perception abounds that one’s faith has very little to do with academic life, and even at religiously affiliated colleges faith remains in the margins. Additionally, the ever-present concern that proselytization provides the underlying motive for those who bring faith-informed academic perspectives into the public sphere remains an obstacle.

Based upon the educational principles of *The Abolition of Man* and keeping the foregoing in mind we are now in a position to consider the proper context for implementing Lewis’s rhetoric and philosophy of education. For real implementation to

occur one cannot think of higher education as completely separate from the other institutions that are noted above. Although government currently works against the education that Lewis has in mind through its alignment with modern educational principles, the family and the Church are constructive allies for it. It appears as though the context that has the most potential to reach these allies and other prospective stakeholders of Lewis's rhetoric and philosophy of education would come through a publicly accessible center or institute working to specifically advance this agenda and those like it.

A center or institute has great potential for advancing Lewis's rhetoric and philosophy of education because it allows for flexibility in delivering and integrating his ideals at the level and degree required based upon the need and context. It would be unnecessary for this center or institute to operate from within a specific college, but seeing that funding for such an endeavor would be the first concern, a private liberal arts college might find such a center worthwhile and provide the necessary financial backing. Since other such centers already exist, implementing Lewis's rhetoric and philosophy of education in this way does not necessarily require its own center. Instead, it could align with comparable centers that are already operating within college campuses to advance specific agendas that support the mission of the institution that houses them. A center that advances the learning alternatives that Lewis provides through his rhetoric and philosophy of education must follow the general principles and ideals of the premodern rhetorical tradition as articulated throughout this interpretive project. As a result, the center should function as follows:

- (1) Collect and store resources that place an emphasis upon scholarship in the humanities and not social science, primary sources and not textbooks.
- (2) Honor the intellectual importance of faith perspectives, be pluralistic but maintain unity on the general principles that diverse people agree on, issues that relate to objective value and the dangers of modern education.
- (3) Raise awareness of key concerns by informing the public through speaking engagements at local churches and high schools.
- (4) Align with the best representatives of the premodern rhetorical tradition, from Isocrates to Cicero to Augustine, representatives that value good philosophy and see the need for articulating it well.
- (5) Organize academic conferences that invite scholarship from various perspectives that continually explore ways to counteract scientism and modern education, including philosophical, faith-informed, rhetorical, and media ecological.
- (6) Create partnerships with think tanks and law experts to strategically lobby on behalf of constituencies that align with the ideals of the center, and take on specific cases that evoke the “authority” of scientism to take away human freedom.
- (7) Provide counterstrategies through training seminars for university teachers who want to avoid unknowingly advancing scientism in disciplines where it has a foothold.

The features on this list are obviously not exhaustive, but it allows, at the very least, a framework whereby Lewis’s rhetoric and philosophy of education could actually begin to

make a difference. Most importantly, a center such as this must maintain a laser focus upon that which unites very diverse people against the common enemy of scientism—the cause of democracy and freedom offers this entrance point.

As seen throughout this project, in *The Abolition of Man* Lewis illustrates the main purpose of education as developing habits of the heart. Like Alexis de Tocqueville before him, Lewis sees the larger political implications that are involved with a society's mores or habits of the heart. In *Democracy in America*, Tocqueville uses the phrase “habits of the heart” to mean “the whole moral and intellectual state of a people” (331). In a work that emerges from Tocqueville, *Habits of the Heart*, Robert Bellah et al. claim that Tocqueville's notion of the “heart” appears as “ultimately biblical” (312, note 28). Thus, Tocqueville and Lewis share a traditional premodern worldview when it comes to the recognition that a person's habits of the heart are largely shaped by the ideas and emotions that are representative of the people they surround themselves with. This insight matters for freedom in democratic society at-large because there are particular habits of the heart that must be practiced and protected in order to maintain the role of discourse and practical reason in the public sphere, namely the cardinal virtues.

The mission of a center that advances Lewis's rhetoric and philosophy of education would be one that recognizes the educational necessity of habituating the human heart to deliberately uphold practical reason and the cardinal virtues that are essential to the maintenance of democratic society. Raising awareness of the modern educational system's failure to habituate the heart according to the precepts necessary for democratic society represents important work that many other societal institutions would readily support. However, the center must also raise awareness as to how the modern

educational system undermines the very institutions that already support the public sphere and preserve the role of virtue. In order for a democratic society to function in meaningful ways we must continue to practice the cardinal virtues within the public sphere, lest our freedoms atrophy. Freedom of speech remains indispensable for true democracy, but for this freedom to survive we must teach the next generation to continually enact the virtues that will protect the significance of discourse within the public sphere. *The Abolition of Man* helps us to see that our freedom will only be as strong as the ordinary people who protect and maintain it, for our freedom cannot protect and maintain itself.

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