C.S. Lewis on the Medieval vs. the Modern Vision of Reality

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There was a boy called Eustace Clarence Scrubb, and he almost deserved it. His parents called him Eustace Clarence and his school masters called him Scrubb. I can't tell you how his friends spoke to him, for he had none. He didn't call his father and mother "Father" and "Mother", but Harold and Alberta. They were very up-to-date and advanced people. They were vegetarians, non-smokers, teetotallers and wore a special kind of underclothes. In their house there was very little furniture and very few clothes on the beds, and the windows were always open.

Eustace Clarence liked animals, especially beetles, if they were dead and pinned on a card. He liked books if they were books of information and had pictures of grain elevators or of fat foreign children doing exercises in model schools.

Eustace Scrubb is the thoroughly modern boy of the Narnia tales and can serve as a good introduction to what Lewis means by "modern". In how Eustace addresses his parents we see the loss of hierarchy in the family. Eustace's parents are followers of the latest, most up-to-date fads. Elsewhere Lewis says about such people: "A man is likely to become "dated" precisely because he is anxious not to be dated, to be contemporary: for to move with the times is to go where all times go." Eustace is a product of the triumph of modern scientism and reductionism, for he "liked animals, especially beetles, if they were dead and pinned on a card." He also suffers from having had a modern education which has done little to spark his imagination; he "liked books if they were books of information." These are themes which Lewis touches on again and again in his essays, poems, and stories, themes we will explore as we look at what C.S. Lewis had to say in both his fiction and non-fiction about what's wrong with being modern and what's right with being medieval.

Lewis called himself "an Old Western man" because he wanted to identify himself with a vision of reality from an earlier age. For him "Western" was not a reference to his race or ethnic origins but to a body of thought and a vision of reality which he believed had been jettisoned by modern people with dire consequences. Lewis saw the modern age as characterized by what he called "chronological snobbery" having first become aware of this in himself as a young man with the help of a friend at Oxford who was far ahead of him in understanding the connection, or disconnection, between Christianity and the modern world. He speaks of this in Surprised by Joy:

> Owen Barfield made short work of what I have called my 'chronological snobbery', the uncritical acceptance of the intellectual climate common to our own age and the You must find why it went out of date. Was it ever refuted … or did it merely die away as fashions do? If the latter, this tells us nothing about its truth or falsehood. From seeing this, one passes to the realization that our own age is also a 'period', and certainly has, like all periods, its own characteristic illusions.

The above quote hints at Lewis's skepticism about what could be called a philosophy of history.

He saw history as messy, unpredictable, and surprising and warned against trying "to grasp in a simple intuition the 'spirit' or 'meaning' of a period." In Reflections on the Psalms he writes: "Between different ages there is no impartial judge on earth, for no one stands outside the historical process; and of course, no one is so completely enslaved to it as those who take our own age to be not one more period but a final and permanent platform from which we can see all other ages objectively."

Lewis rejected the modern myth of Evolutionism or Progressivism as the grid for interpreting history. The chief characteristic of Evolutionism is the belief that all change is for the better; change is hence exalted and permanence is demeaned. Lewis calls Evolutionism a myth because he sees it as the "imaginative and not the logical result of 'modern science'." In his essay "The Funeral of a Great Myth" he says, "The myth uses a selection from the scientific theories -- a selection made in obedience to imaginative and emotional needs. ... In science Evolution is a theory about changes: in the myth it is a fact about improvements."

In 1954 when Lewis was appointed to a literature chair at Cambridge University he gave an inaugural address called "De Descriptione Temporum" ["Concerning a Description of the Times"]. In this lecture he says that the Great Divide in history is a fairly recent event; it is the divide between our modern technological age and all that came before it. While the seeds of this change were sown in the Enlightenment, they did not bear fruit in the arts and in the culture as a whole until the late 19th century according to Lewis. He says, "Between Jane Austen and us comes the birth of the machines. ... This is parallel to the great changes by which we divide pre-history. This is on a level with the change from stone to bronze, or from a pastoral to an agricultural economy. It alters Man's place in nature. ... I conclude that it is really the greatest change in the history of Western Man."

Why Lewis believes this to be true will become clear as we look at what he has to say about what we have lost in the move from pre-Modern to Modern times. The first loss we will consider is an idea which was held in common by a wide spectrum of people in ancient times--Greeks, Hindus, Confucianists, and Christians -- as well as by the people of Medieval Christendom. Pre-moderns had a belief in what Lewis called the "doctrine of objective value" which moderns have rejected. In The Abolition of Man Lewis defines 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." In pre-Modern times it could be said in an absolute way that certain responses were appropriate and that one ought to respond in a certain way to certain actions or objects. All assignations of value were not merely subjective. To call something "beautiful" or someone "good" was not just a description of one's own emotions. Pre-modern people believed in a fixed moral order; there were absolutes to guide people's judgements and their behavior. In "The Poison of Subjectivism" Lewis writes:

> 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. It was taken for granted that in temptation passion was opposed, not to some sentiment, but to reason. ... The modern view is very different. It does not believe that value judgements are really judgements at all. They are sentiments, or complexes, or attitudes, produced in a community by the pressure of its and its traditions, and differing from one community to another. To say that a thing is good is merely to express our feeling about it; and our feeling about it is the feeling we have been socially conditioned to have. ... Unless the measuring rod is independent of the things measured, we can do no measuring.

In modern times Truth, Goodness, and Beauty are not fixed objective realities but matters of

personal taste. With his belief in permanent moral standards pre-modern man was freer than modern man. Lewis continues: "If good means only the local ideology, how can those who invent the local ideology be guided by any idea of good themselves? The very idea of freedom presupposes some objective moral law which overarches rulers and ruled alike. ... Unless we return to the crude and nursery-like belief in objective values, we perish."

Secondly, pre-modern people believed in the reality of invisible, permanent things. Plato called these "forms". In medieval times when Christianity was the controlling worldview in the Western world the ultimate invisible reality was God, the source of all Truth, Goodness, and Beauty. Lewis wrote often about the concreteness of non-physical realities. In emphasizing the importance of this view of invisible reality he goes so far as to call God a "Thing" in his book Miracles. "If we fully understand what God is we should see that there is no question whether he is. It would always be impossible that He should not exist. He is the opaque center of all existences, the thing that simply and entirely is, the fountain of facthood." Medieval man had no problem accepting this; for modern man, on the other hand, the expression "immaterial things" is a contradiction in terms.

Medieval people also had a proper understanding of human beings as fallen yet glorious with, in the words of Prince Caspian, "honour enough to erect the head of the poorest beggar, and shame enough to bow the shoulders of the greatest emperor on earth." Lewis deals with this in A Preface to Paradise Lost where he contrasts the modern preference for the natural, the spontaneous, and the novel with the training in virtue practiced in earlier times. In this book he answers some of Milton's modern critics. One criticizes Milton for depicting characters having "stock responses to conventional situations." Lewis addresses this denigration of stock responses:

> Next comes the question of Stock Responses. By a Stock Response Dr. Richards [the critic] means a deliberately organized attitude which is substituted for the 'direct free play of experience'. In my opinion such deliberate organization is one of the necessities of human life. ... All that we describe as constancy in love or friendship, as loyalty in political life, or, in general, as perseverance -- all solid virtue and stable pleasure-- depends on organizing chosen attitudes and maintaining them against the eternal flux (or 'direct free play') of mere immediate experience. ... To me it seems that most people's responses are not 'stock' enough, and that the play of experience is too free and too direct in most of us for safety or happiness or human dignity.

Lewis goes on to give several reasons for this wrong view of stock responses. Two of these are ideas which have gained wide acceptance among modern people. The first Lewis calls "Romantic Primitivism which prefers the merely natural to the elaborated, the unwilled to the willed. Hence a loss of the old conviction ... that simple experience, so far from being something venerable, is in itself mere raw material, to be mastered, shaped, and worked by will." The second idea which explains this wrong view is the belief in the natural goodness of people,

> a belief ... that a certain elementary rectitude of human response is 'given' by nature herself, and may be taken for granted. ... I believe this to be a serious delusion. Children like dabbling in dirt; they have to be taught the stock response to it. Normal sexuality, far from being a datum, is achieved by a long and delicate process of suggestion and adjustment which proves too difficult for some individuals and, at times, for whole societies. ... That elementary rectitude of human response, at which we are so ready to fling the unkind epithets of 'stock', 'crude', bourgeois', and 'conventional', so far from being 'given' is a delicate balance of trained habits, laboriously acquired and easily

> lost, on the maintenance of which depend both our virtues and our pleasures and even, perhaps, the survival of our species. ... While the moderns have been pressing forward to conquer new territories of consciousness, the old territory, in which man alone can live, has been left unguarded, and we are in danger of finding the enemy in our rear. We need most urgently to recover the lost poetic art of enriching a response without making it eccentric, and of being normal without being vulgar.

Those with no understanding of man's fallenness do not see the necessity of training in virtue and obedience, of developing habits or "stock responses" which enable one to act nobly, to do his duty when nobility or self-sacrifice is required.

Lastly, in the Middle Ages people had an understanding of the hierarchical nature of reality and thus an ability to respond with awe and proper solemnity to things higher than themselves. This understanding was rooted in the vision of reality which Lewis describes in great detail in his book The Discarded Image. This all-encompassing image discarded after the Scientific Revolution was the medieval cosmology, the geocentric model of the universe, which Lewis says served as the "backcloth" for the lives and artistic endeavors of medieval people. Lewis contends that the vision of reality which flowed from this view, though scientifically inaccurate, was truer to what is in many aspects than the modern view. I will only take time to show how this model affected medieval man's understanding of his place in the universe. Far from seeing himself as the all-important center of the universe, this geocentric view, claimed Lewis, allowed man to feel the smallness of Earth and of himself very intensely and produced humility and awe. Earth was the lowest place toward which everything else inclined. Medieval man looked up into a universe which was not cold, dark, and empty, but full of light and the music of the spheres. The highest thing was Caelum Ipsum, Heaven itself, full of God, light, and love. This vision, says Lewis, inspired wonder and awe, not terror and despair. Medieval man "is like a man being conducted through an immense cathedral, not like one lost in a shoreless sea."

This understanding of the hierarchical nature of reality extended to medieval man's relationships with other men. Lewis says that people have a "craving for inequality"; they want to look up to someone. Hence, monarchy for the medievals reflected something about the nature of the universe. In an essay called "Equality" Lewis writes:

> Monarchy can easily be debunked; but watch the faces, mark well the accents of the debunkers. These are men whose tap-root in Eden has been cut; whom no rumor of the polyphony, the dance can reach -- men to whom pebbles laid in a row are more beautiful than an arch. Yet even if they desire mere equality they cannot reach it. Where men are forbidden to honor a king they honor millionaires, athletes, or film-stars instead; even famous prostitutes or gangsters. For spiritual nature, like bodily nature, will be served; deny it food and it will gobble poison.

This acceptance of hierarchy also led to an understanding of solemnity, a belief that there were occasions when pomp and ceremony were appropriate. Solemnity is only possible for people who can forget themselves in the light of something greater than themselves. Lewis gives a defense of solemnity in A Preface to Paradise Lost.

This quality will be understood by anyone who really understands the Middle English word 'solempne'. This means something different, but not quite different, from modern English solemn. Like solemn it implies the opposite of what is familiar, free and easy, or ordinary. But unlike solemn it does not suggest gloom, oppression or austerity. The ball in the first act of Romeo and Juliet was a solemnity...Feasts are, in this sense, more solemn than fasts. Easter

is solempne, Good Friday is not. The Solempne is the festal which is also the stately and the ceremonial, the proper occasion for pomp--and the very fact that pompous is now used only in a bad sense measures the degree to which we have lost the old idea of solemnity. To recover it you must think of a court ball, or a coronation, or a victory march, as these things appear to people who enjoy them. ... Above all, you must be rid of the hideous idea, fruit of a wide-spread inferiority complex, that pomp, on the proper occasions, has any connexion with vanity or self-conceit. A celebrant approaching the altar, a princess led out by a king to dance a minuet, a major-domo preceding the boar's head at a Christmas feast -- all these wear unusual clothes and move with calculated dignity. This does not mean they are vain, but that they are obedient; they are obeying the hoc age which presides over every solemnity. The modern habit of doing ceremonial things unceremoniously is no proof of humility; rather it proves the offender's inability to forget himself in the rite, and his readiness to spoil for everyone else the proper pleasure of ritual.

In summary medieval man with his belief in objective value and a fixed moral order, in invisible, permanent realities, in his understanding of himself as what Francis Schaeffer called "a glorious ruin", and in his belief in hierarchy as integral to the way things are had "his head in the clouds and his feet on the ground." Peter Kreeft in C.S. Lewis for the Third Millenium summarizes Lewis's understanding of people in the Middle Ages this way:

> Medieval man thought of himself (to use a Chesteronian image) neither as a balloon flying loose in the sky (like our spiritualizing orientalizers and gnostics), nor as a mole burrowing in the earth (like our modern materialists), but as a tree, with roots firmly planted in the earth and branches reaching into the heavens...We moderns have lost both the solid objectivity of the high universals (especially Truth and Goodness) and the low particulars, the concrete world. Both have been dissolved into a vague, abstract ideological-sociological-psychological mid-range. We are the 'middle' ages.

Where does this leave modern man? Having rejected the medieval view of reality modern man finds himself on the other side of a Great Divide. The moderns have replaced the belief in the supernatural, in permanent, invisible realities with naturalism. Ultimate reality is located in the physical world and is discoverable through scientific observation and experimentation. Scientific fact divorced from meaning is the highest truth. Lewis says that followers of naturalism who see all the facts but not the meaning are more like animals than people. "You have noticed that most dogs cannot understand pointing. You point to a bit of food on the floor: the dog, instead of looking at the floor sniffs at your finger. A finger is a finger to him, and that is all. His world is all fact and no meaning. And in a period when factual realism is dominant we shall find people deliberately inducing upon themselves this doglike mind." Eustace Scrubb shows himself to be the victim of materialistic thinking when he is discussing stars with a retired star in Narnia. "'In our world,' said Eustace, ' a star is a huge ball of flaming gas.' 'Even in your world, my son, that is not what a star is but only what it is made of.'" Modern man has emptied the world of meaning.

In modern times subjectivism has replaced the belief in the doctrine of objective value. If there are no moral absolutes then value must be assigned subjectively. Lewis gives a chilling description of this momentous shift in man's thinking.

At the outset, the universe appears packed with will, intelligence, life and positive qualities; every tree is a nymph and every planet is a god. Man himself is akin to the gods. The advance of knowledge gradually empties this rich and genial universe; first of its gods, then of its colours, smells, sounds and tastes, finally of solidity itself as solidity was originally imagined. As these

items are taken from the world, they are transferred to the subjective side of the account; classified as our sensations, thoughts, images or emotions. The Subject becomes gorged, inflated, at the expense of the Object. But the matter does not end there. The same method which has emptied the world now proceeds to empty ourselves. The masters of the method soon announce that we were just as mistaken when we attributed 'souls', or 'selves' or 'minds' to human organisms, as when we attributed Dryads to the trees. ... We, who have personified all other things, turn out to be ourselves mere personifications. ... And thus we arrived at a result uncommonly like zero. While we were reducing the world to almost nothing we deceived ourselves with the fancy that all its lost qualities were being kept safe ... as 'things in our own mind'. Apparently we had no mind of the sort required. The Subject is as empty as the Object. Almost nobody has been making linguistic mistakes about almost nothing.

When modern man makes himself 'the measure of all things', the possibility of objective truth is gone, the possibility of separating subject from object is lost. All becomes subject and there is no basis for knowing whether the subjective is real or significant.

In spite of his philosophical pessimism, modern man has technological optimism; in other words, he has faith in progress through technology. Myths die hard. The myth of Evolutionism, the faith in the upward progress of man fed by the Enlightenment belief in the goodness of man and 19th century Darwinism lives on. Lewis says, "Universal evolutionism, the belief that the very formula of universal process is from imperfect to perfect, from small beginnings to great endings ... is perhaps the deepest habit of mind in the contemporary world." The imagery of the Machine Age provides a strong apologetic for this faith in progress and for the belief that 'newer' is always better than 'older'. As we have already noted Lewis saw the invention of machines as the greatest change in the history of Western man. He said that the machine provided a "new archetypal image for Western society."

How has it come about that we use the highly emotive word 'stagnation', with all its malodorous and malarial overtones, for what other ages would have called 'permanence'? Why does the word 'primitive' at once suggest to us clumsiness, inefficiency, barbarity? Why does 'latest' in advertisements mean 'best'? ... I submit that what has imposed this climate of opinion so firmly on the human mind is a new archetypal image. It is the image of old machines being superseded by new and better ones. For in the world of machines the new most often really is better and the primitive really is clumsy.

The belief in permanent things worth cherishing and protecting has been replaced by the blind faith in progress.

Finally, modern man has replaced a belief in hierarchy with egalitarianism. Moderns have turned the political idea of democracy into a false doctrine that goes beyond equality under the law to the belief that all men are equal; they have developed a hatred for superiority. These are those for whom "pebbles laid in a row are more beautiful than an arch." In modern times the word 'democracy', says Lewis in "Screwtape Proposes a Toast", is used as an incantation to sanction the degrading feeling that reveals itself in one believing and saying, "I'm as good as you" and ends with one laboring "to pull everyone else down to his own level." In his essay "Equality" Lewis calls 'equal rights' "a kind of medicine for our fallen condition." Political equality, he goes on to explain, is a good thing not because people are so good that they deserve a share in governing but because they are so wicked that no man can be trusted with power over his fellows. Modern man has got it wrong; he believes that people are basically good and thus he doesn't recognize this desire for equality for what it is; envy toward those who are in some way better than we are. Lewis puts his finger on the problem: "No man who says 'I'm as good as

you' believes it. He would not say it if he did...The claim to equality, outside the strictly political field, is made only by those who feel themselves to be in some way inferior. What it expresses is precisely the itching, smarting, writhing awareness of an inferiority which the patient [this is Screwtape speaking] refuses to accept." In "Screwtape Proposes a Toast" Lewis goes on to show how this wrongly conceived "democratic spirit" leads to the abolition of education, the end of real democracies, and the damnation of individuals.
In this final section I would like to look at what Lewis says about education in the light of this sharp divide between medieval and modern times. Much is implied on this subject in a great deal of what he has written, but we will look at two works in which he addresses education directly.

In "Screwtape Proposes a Toast" Lewis shows what effect the "I'm as good as you" doctrine of modern man has had upon the schools. In his speech to the graduating devils Screwtape explains how the schools where the spirit of egalitarianism prevails are a great asset to hell. This spirit which encourages pulling everyone down to the same level leads finally to a movement to eliminate "every kind of human excellence -- moral, cultural, social, intellectual." Within the "new" education this means "that dunces and idlers must not be made to feel inferior to intelligent and industrious pupils. That would be undemocratic." Individual differences must be disguised. In the name of democracy all can get good grades on exams, all can go to university and find some courses, no matter how far they may be from the old idea of liberal arts, in which they can succeed. Those with the ability to excel and move ahead must be held back.

In a word," says Screwtape, "we may reasonably hope for the virtual abolition of education when 'I'm as good as you' has fully had its way. All incentives to learn and all penalties for not learning will vanish. The few who might want to learn will be prevented; who are they to overtop their fellows? and anyway the teachers -- or should I say nurses? -- will be far too busy reassuring the dunces and patting them on the back to waste any time on real teaching. We shall no longer have to plan and toil to spread imperturbable conceit and incurable ignorance among men. The little vermin themselves will do it for us.

In summarizing this essay Clyde Kilby describes the education envisioned here as "a system calculated to eliminate great men and produce a world of cocksure subliterates resentful of any criticism and a state of mind which naturally excludes humility, clarity, true contentment, and the pleasures of gratitude and admiration."
Lewis has an answer for Screwtape in "Notes on the Way":

> Equality (outside mathematics) is a purely social conception. It applies to man as a political and economic animal. It has no place in the world of the mind. Beauty is not democratic; she reveals herself more to the few than to the many. ... Virtue is not democratic; she is achieved by those who pursue her more hotly than most men. Truth is not democratic; she demands special talents and special industry in those to whom she gives her favors. Political democracy is doomed if it tries to extend its demand for equality into these higher spheres. Ethical, intellectual, or aesthetic democracy is death. A truly democratic education -- one which will preserve democracy --- must be, in its own field, ruthlessly aristocratic, shamelessly high-brow...

This is a description of the old education of pre-modern times. Here is Lewis helping us to answer the charge of "elitism" as we teach to the old, high standards.

Lewis's most extensive treatment of the "old" versus the "new" education is in his book The Abolition of Man in which he argues that the triumph of subjectivism will lead to the end of

man as man. When one rejects the Tao, the term Lewis uses for traditional morality seen by all pre-moderns as absolute, the goal of education changes radically. The goal of the "old" education was to "inculcate right sentiments". This was based on the acceptance of the doctrine of objective value, the view that things actually merit our approval or disapproval because of what they are. Lewis goes back to Plato and Aristotle to explain this view of education.

Aristotle says that the aim of education is to make the pupil like and dislike what he ought. When the age for reflective thought comes, the pupil thus trained in "ordinate affections' or 'just sentiments' will easily find the first principles of Ethics. … Plato before him said the same. The little human animal will not at first have the right responses. It must be trained to feel pleasure, liking, disgust, and hatred at those things which really are pleasant, likeable, disgusting and hateful. In the Republic, the well-nurtured youth is one 'who would see most clearly whatever was amiss in ill-made works of man or ill-grown works of nature, and with a just distaste would blame and hate the ugly even from his earliest years and would give delighted praise to beauty, receiving it into his soul and being nourished by it, so that he becomes a man of gentle heart.'

Lewis sees the goal of the new education as creating "men without chests", that is, students who have been fortified against sentiment and thus have heads and stomachs but no hearts, intellects and appetites but nothing to mediate between the two. Believing that nothing is objectively good or evil and that emotions make one a prey to propaganda, educators "debunk" all emotion and thus leave students more open than ever to propaganda. Lewis's describes the problem thus: "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." He then goes on to make a case for the crucial role that trained emotions play in the development of virtuous human beings.

> Without the aid of trained emotions the intellect is powerless against the animal organism. … In battle it is not syllogisms that will keep the reluctant nerves and muscles to their post in the third hour of the bombardment. The crudest sentimentalism about a flag or a country or a regiment will be of more use. We were told all of this long ago by Plato. As the king governs by his executive, so Reason in man must rule the mere appetites by means of the 'spirited element.' The head rules the belly through the chest -- the seat, as Alanus tells us, of Magnanimity, of emotions organized by trained habits into stable sentiments. The Chest – Magnanimity – Sentiment -- these are the indispensable liaison officers between cerebral man and visceral man. It may even be said that it is by this middle element that man is man: for by his intellect he is mere spirit and by his appetite mere animal…We make men without chests and expect of them virtue and enterprise. We laugh at honor and are shocked to find traitors in our midst. We castrate and bid the geldings be fruitful.

Lewis also shows in The Abolition of Man something of the effect this new view of education has on the curriculum. The study of great literature has given way to social conditioning. Advertisements serve the purpose of teaching students to beware of writing that would stir one's emotions as well or better than worthwhile literature. Pupils are not being taught to distinguish between good writing and bad writing; they are not learning to read and reread and understand the text of things worth reading because, of course, objective worth cannot be assigned to works of literature. In another essay on education entitled "Lilies That Fester" Lewis warns against the kind of education which serves political ends and teaches pupils "to make the right responses to the right authors." He seems to have foreseen the situation we find ourselves in today in which schools are guided in their choices of reading material for students by concerns about

multiculturalism and political correctness.

It becomes clear that the role of the teacher in the new education has changed as well. Rather than being the old scholar eager to initiate the young scholar into a world full of objective realities, full of Truth, Goodness and Beauty, full of wonder, the teachers in the new system are Conditioners more concerned with psychology than knowledge and virtue. Lewis's contrast between the old teacher and the new teacher is probably his best-known quote on education:

Where the old initiated, the new merely 'conditions'. The old dealt with its pupils as grown birds deal with young birds when they teach them to fly; the new deals with them more as the poultry-keeper deals with young birds--making them thus or thus for purposes of which the birds know nothing. In a word, the old was a kind of propagation -- men transmitting manhood to men: the new is merely propaganda.

In the end pupils of the new education become ready subjects for the amoral "man-molders" who control the society which has swallowed the poison of subjectivism.

As teachers in classical schools how then shall we live in a world so infected with naturalism, subjectivism, egalitarianism, and reductionism? How can we bring the best of the medieval vision of reality into our schools and into our teaching? First, we need to become more aware of how infected we all are with Enlightenment thinking and all that flows from it. We need to address our own "chronological snobbery" by immersing ourselves in this mind-set which is so alien to the mind-set of our own day. Lewis would tell us to read old books!

Another lesson we can learn from Lewis is the role that the imagination can play in opening our own and our students' eyes to a reality much larger than that of the modern world. Images are powerful conveyors of truth. The imagination enables Truth to sneak "past the watchful dragons" of scientism and subjectivism into the minds of readers or listeners when truth head-on would be rejected or ignored. Lewis says that he wrote his fiction, in particular the Narnia stories, to sneak important truths "past the watchful dragons" of dry orthodoxy and musty religiosity. In the same way by choosing carefully the stories we read, the literature we teach, the plays we perform we can use beauty in the service of truth, fling open the windows of what Thomas Howard calls "the airless hutch of modernity", and introduce our students into a world full of permanent and splendid and very real things which will fit them for eternity.