

## **Civility In C. S. Lewis And J. R. R. Tolkien**

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### **Abstract**

Without a belief in a Natural Law that a personal God reveals to all humans, they are condemned to live in a society in which power is the determiner of behavior and, thus, civility and its fruits are non-existent.

In their fiction, letters, and critical writings, Tolkien and Lewis reveal their belief that the Natural Law provides an objective standard of morality necessary if men and women are to eschew barbarism and its fruits, including violence and rudeness. Lewis's reflections on this subject are also present in his sermons and apologetics, forms in which Tolkien did not write.

Their fiction fulfills the classical ideal that literature pleases and instructs, for in their secondary worlds, they create characters, actions, and settings that embody the results of following the Natural Law or denying it. In Middle Earth Tolkien involves their senses as readers respond to the good and evil characters and lands. Inhabitants shape their worlds, as in the beautiful Rivendell and Lorien, by their adherence to a law beyond their individual desires or, as in the hideous Mordor and Isengard, by their imposing these desires on the world around them.

Similarly in Narnia and in Bracton College and environs, Lewis presents to readers environments in which good characters ultimately achieve beauty and evil characters are marked by ugliness of form and deed.

Both authors present the struggle for civility in which each generation much engage. Each age must participate in that struggle so that the next may have the means to carry out its role in this universal duty.

## **Civility In C. S. Lewis And J. R. R. Tolkien**

As the final action in Flannery O'Connor's "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" is about to occur, the vicious murderer, the Misfit, says of Christ's rising from the dead: "...if He didn't, then it's nothing for you to do but enjoy the few minutes you got left the best way you can – by killing somebody or burning down his house or doing some other meanness to him. No pleasure but meanness..." At the very end of the story, he says, "It's no real pleasure in life."<sup>1</sup> O'Connor places into the mouth of her character a concept that flows from her conviction that if there is no God, then all is possible and permitted to the autonomous man, an idea that Dostoevsky has characters in various works say in one form or another. The Misfit's last remark undercuts the notion of any possible joy from this "meanness," this incivility. On the contrary, there is no joy, no pleasure, in vice.

That men without faith in a personal and loving God have no virtue has societal ramifications. Civilization is only possible if its members see themselves in an organic relationship with their fellow men. Without such a vision, power becomes the base for society; civility is ephemeral; and joy is non-existent.

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<sup>1</sup> Flannery O'Connor, "A Good Man Is Hard to Find," *The Complete Stories* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1972), 132, 133.

The *OED* in its definition of civility begins by contrasting it with barbarity; the editors then define civility as “Behavior proper to the intercourse of civilized people; ordinary courtesy or politeness, as opposed to rudeness of behavior; decent respect, consideration.” Inescapable in this conception of civility is moral absolutism and philosophical realism. Expressing the idea that civilized behavior is “proper” and “decent” and assuming that these are knowable qualities lead one to acknowledge a standard independent of the subject. That standard is the Natural Law.

The assumption that there is an objective standard of morality, a natural law available to all men and necessary for humans to eschew barbarism and rudeness, is implicit in the lives and fiction of Lewis and Tolkien. Neither Lewis nor Tolkien accepts relativism and utilitarianism as bases for living. Moreover, both men engage in that on-going generational project in which the next generation is taught these objective standards. Tolkien’s letters, particularly to his sons Michael and Christopher, reveal his conviction in concrete terms. Throughout his judgments his Catholicism is apparent.<sup>2</sup> He tells Christopher (29 November 1943): “the most improper job of any man, even saints (who at any rate were at least unwilling to take it on), is bossing other men.”<sup>3</sup> His belief in the fall of man and the resulting sinfulness that permeates mankind and its works explains Tolkien’s opposition to anyone’s seeking power, his rejection of the possibility of utopian schemes of government, and his defense of freedom.<sup>4</sup>

Unlike C. S. Lewis, Tolkien did not write apologetics nor give sermons in which his ideas, so clearly expressed in his letters, were a matter of public discourse. However, in his essay, “On Fairy-Stories,”<sup>5</sup> Tolkien lists four qualities of fairy-stories that he thinks peculiar to them: fantasy, recovery, escape, and consolation. In his examination of recovery he makes explicit his philosophical realism, even as he denies any philosophizing:

Recovery (which includes return and renewal of health) is a re-gaining –  
regaining of a clear view. I do not say “seeing things as they are” and involve  
myself with the philosophers, though I might venture to say “seeing things as

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<sup>2</sup> J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Letters of...* Ed. Humphrey Carpenter (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1981), see #’s 89, 250, among others.

<sup>3</sup> #52.

<sup>4</sup> See letters #43, 55, 75, 77, 94, 96, 102, 246, among others, in which these topics are discussed.

<sup>5</sup> J. R. R. Tolkien, “On Fairy-stories.” *Tree and Leaf*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965). In the Preface Tolkien describes the history of the essay: “originally composed as an Andrew Lang Lecture and was in a shorter form delivered in the University of St. Andrews in 1938. It was eventually published, with a little enlargement, as one of the items in *Essays Presented to Charles Williams*, Oxford University Press, 1947, now out of print. It is here reproduced with only a few minor alterations” (vii-viii).

we are (or were) meant to see them” – as things apart from ourselves. We need, in any case, to clean our windows; so that the things seen clearly may be freed from the drab blur of triteness or familiarity – from possessiveness.<sup>6</sup>

In this praeteritio, Tolkien is saying that reality and truth exist and that it is our duty to see and conform to them. His anti-solipsism and his assumption of a universal Natural Law, like his aesthetic practice, are based on his religious convictions.<sup>7</sup>

Lewis is more overt in explicating his philosophical foundation, for he writes apologetics and gives sermons in which he explores these topics. For example, in his *Abolition of Man*<sup>8</sup> Lewis carefully traces the destruction of an objective moral code and describes how it inevitably leads to the devolution of society with a few controllers or conditioners over many who are controlled. When the “Conditioners” move “outside the *Tao*, they have stepped into the void. Nor are their subjects necessarily unhappy men. They are not men at all: they are artefacts.”<sup>9</sup> Lewis uses the word *Tao* to mean the Natural Law. In one of his most prescient passages he doubts

whether history shows us one example of a man who, having stepped outside traditional morality and attained power, has used that power benevolently. I am inclined to think that the Conditioners will hate the conditioned...If you will not obey the *Tao*, or else commit suicide, obedience to impulse (and therefore, in the long run, to mere ‘nature’) is the only course left open.<sup>10</sup>

He insists that

Either we are rational spirit obliged for ever to obey the absolute values of the *Tao*, or else we are mere nature to be kneaded and cut into new shapes for the pleasure of masters who must, by hypothesis, have no motive but their own ‘natural’ impulses.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> “On Fairy-stories” 57.

<sup>7</sup> Tolkien and Lewis are in the tradition enunciated by Robert George, *The Clash of Orthodoxies* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2001): Jews and Christians “on key moral issues...are rationally superior to the alternatives proposed by secular liberals and those within the religious denominations who have abandoned traditional moral principles in favor of secularist morality” (xiv). Similarly Vigen Guroian, *Rallying the Really Human Things* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2005) cites Chesterton’s insistence that “true humanism...is theocentric...grounded in the doctrine of the Incarnation” (4) and Chesterton’s assertion that secularist philosophies cannot “sustain...belief in the dignity, freedom, and eternal worth of the human person” (5).

<sup>8</sup> In a letter to Clyde S. Kilby of 11 January 1961, he says that he “was there trying to write ethics, not theology” in *The Abolition of Man* (C. S. Lewis, *The Collected Letters...* vol. III [San Francisco: Harper, 2007], 1227.)

<sup>9</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947), 41. Spelling and abbreviations in quotations from Lewis are in the sources.

<sup>10</sup> *Abolition...* 42.

His letters reveal a more theological analysis of the Natural Law. In a February 10, 1941 letter, Lewis explain to Dr. James W. Welch, a clergyman of the Church of England with whom Lewis exchanged a number of letters,<sup>12</sup> that he wants to write about the Law of Nature, or objective right and wrong. It seems to me that the N.T., by preaching repentance and forgiveness, always *assumes* an audience who already believe in the Law of nature and know they have disobeyed it. In modern England we cannot at present assume this...<sup>13</sup>

In a May 15, 1941 letter to his friend Sister Penelope, an Anglican nun and prolific author,<sup>14</sup> Lewis explains what he is doing in his broadcasts over the B.B.C. (later published as *Mere Christianity*): “*praeparatio evangelica* rather than *evangelium*” because his audience does not accept a universal moral law.<sup>15</sup> Lewis strikes this same note in an April 1947 letter to Sir Laurence Whistler, the celebrated glass engraver:<sup>16</sup>

In every other age the preaching of Christianity has been able to presuppose the light of nature in its hearers....Early Xtian preachers were fighting for the Supernatural against nature. What we are up against is the anti-Natural.<sup>17</sup> Occasioned by his reading *The Screwtape Letters* in 1947, Don Giovanni Calabria, an Italian priest and founder of a congregation, began a correspondence with Lewis that lasted until the Saint’s death in 1954.<sup>18</sup> Both men saw the essential connection between Christianity and the Natural Law. In a March 17, 1953 letter, Lewis writes:

What you say about the present state of mankind is true: indeed, it is even worse than you say.

For they neglect not only the law of Christ but even the Law of Nature as known by the Pagans....

They err who say ‘the world is turning pagan again’. Would that it were! The truth is that we are falling into a much worse state.

‘Post-Christian man’ is not the same as ‘pre-Christian man’. He

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<sup>11</sup> *Abolition...* 46

<sup>12</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Collected Letters...* vol. II (San Francisco: Harper, 2004), 469 n.25.

<sup>13</sup> II: 470.

<sup>14</sup> *Correspondence II*: 1055-59.

<sup>15</sup> II: 484.

<sup>16</sup> II: 1081.

<sup>17</sup> II: 773.

<sup>18</sup> Pope John Paul II canonized him in 1999. II: 1036-39.

is as far removed as virgin is from widow: there is nothing in common except want of a spouse: but there is a great difference between a spouse-to-come and a spouse lost.<sup>19</sup>

A subsequent letter to St. Giovanni (15 September 1953) is even more emphatic:

[G]rave dangers hang over us. This results from the apostasy of the great part of Europe from the Christian Faith. For no one returns from Christianity to the same state before Christianity but into a worse state...For faith perfects nature but faith lost corrupts nature. Therefore many men of our time have lost not only the supernatural light but also the natural light which pagans possessed.<sup>20</sup>

The fictional canon of C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien embody *dulce et utile*; they please and instruct, particularly their younger readers, about the Natural Law. Without necessarily knowing the philosophical concepts, readers meet the failures of humanism divorced from the Natural Law. Instances of barbarity and rudeness in which ordinary courtesy and decent respect are absent abound; they are the actions of people who have replaced a belief in a universal moral law with solipsism, situational ethics, and radical individualism.<sup>21</sup> From such replacement, social and individual evils flow. Each of these authors creates secondary worlds in which the materials of the primary world are reworked into a creative construct that is true to the laws of nature and to the Natural Law. In this secondary world the ethos of all characters reveals itself in their actions, exemplifying the axiom that as a being is so he acts. The result of their actions is creative or destructive, one of right order or chaos, civility or barbarism.

In *The Hobbit* Tolkien creates beings whose ethos is clear from their first appearance. The protagonist Bilbo is courteous, inviting Gandalf to tea and welcoming the unexpected dwarves as they arrive. With bowing and traditional phrases, with tea and cakes, he remembers his manners. What makes this apparently conventional exchange so significant is that Bilbo is

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<sup>19</sup> *Collected Letters*... III:306-07.

<sup>20</sup> *Collected Letters*... III: 365.

<sup>21</sup> Guroian describes Burke's rejections of situational ethics: "At the trial of Warren Hastings, the corrupt British Governor-General of Bengal, Burke condemned Britain's ruthless exploitation of the people of India. Burke vehemently protested what he called the 'geographical morality' that Hastings and his defenders had proposed in order to justify the rape of an ancient and noble civilization. They claimed that 'the duties of men, in public and private situations, are not to be governed by their relation to the great Governor of the Universe, or by their relation to mankind, but by climate, degrees of longitude, parallels, not of life, but of latitudes: as if, when you have crossed the equinoctial, all the virtues die.' Burke responds..."the laws of morality are the same everywhere...and all the world over." (222) Robert George dismisses the relevance of purely "prudential answers" to the question: "Why should anyone respect the rights of others?...people can often get away with violating others' rights...And many do it" (xiv).

increasingly disconcerted by the arrival of dwarf after dwarf until thirteen are sitting at his table with the amused Gandalf. In chapter I in the midst of unforeseen guests the following words and phrases appear: “as the host: he knew his duty and stuck to it however painful,” “remembering his manners,” and “polite.”<sup>22</sup> Even confused and afraid, Bilbo is civil to his uninvited guests. Contrarily, Bill, Bert, and Tom, the Trolls, display disgusting table manners, abusive conversation, and brutal fighting.<sup>23</sup> Without moralizing, the avuncular narrator communicates a moral vision to his readers. Similarly in his depiction of Elrond’s home and valley, the narrator reveals how the land reflects its inhabitants: orderly, beautiful, fragrant, welcoming, and refreshing: “Evil things did not come into that valley.”<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, we learn that in the Misty Mountains “most of the paths were cheats and deceptions and led nowhere or to bad ends; and most of the passes were infested by evil things and dreadful dangers.”<sup>25</sup> Among them are evil goblins – ugly, fierce, cruel: “The goblins were very rough, and pinched unmercifully, and chuckled and laughed in their horrible voices...”<sup>26</sup> They are “untidy and dirty,” holders of “prisoners and slaves that have to work till they die for want of air and light.”<sup>27</sup> Another of the evil things is “old Gollum, a small slimy creature...” who sees Bilbo as “a choice feast; at least a tasty morsel...”<sup>28</sup> Throughout the book civility exists only in characters for whom the Natural Law is a guide.

At the same time, Tolkien does not ignore the erosion of civility by good characters when they give in, not always with awareness, to vice. With the death of the dragon Smaug, the Elves and the men desire some of the treasure the dragon had guarded under the mountain. The dwarves at first rejoice in the restoration of their halls and treasures until they hear of how the elves and men plan to gain some of the treasure that is theirs in part. Roac, the leader of the ravens, says to Thorin, that such restoration could bring “peace once more among dwarves and men and elves after the long desolation; but it may cost you dear in gold.” Thorin’s anger at losing any of the treasure leads him to summon his fellow dwarves for a battle.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1966), 16, 17, 25.

<sup>23</sup> *The Hobbit* 44 ff.

<sup>24</sup> 63.

<sup>25</sup> 65.

<sup>26</sup> 71.

<sup>27</sup> *Hobbit* 73.

<sup>28</sup> 82 ff.

<sup>29</sup> 270-71.

Although Bard, who single-handedly killed Smaug, presents a reasonable case for recompense from the hoard to his city, the Dale, with “fair words and true...he did not reckon with the power that gold has upon which a dragon has long brooded, nor with dwarvish hearts. Long hours in the past days Thorin had spent in the treasury, and the lust of it was heavy on him.”<sup>30</sup> Only when the thoroughly evil Goblins and Wild Wolves attack do the Elves, Men, and Dwarves to unite in the Battle of the Five Armies. The good win, but not without a great price, the death of Thorin. Before he dies, he reconciles with Bilbo, saying: “If more of us valued food and cheer and song above hoarded gold, it would be a merrier world.”<sup>31</sup> The underlying idea behind these words is that civility and its fruits are too often undervalued because of vice that leads to the abandonment of the moral law.

In the *The Lord of the Rings*, the connections between civility and virtue are even more extensively presented: languages, names, and settings reveal good and evil. Flannery O’Connor describes how “The artist penetrates the concrete world in order to find at its depths the image of its source, the image of ultimate reality.”<sup>32</sup> Tolkien creates images in which readers can discern the reality behind these images. O’Connor contends that the author’s “theology, even in its most remote reaches, will have a direct bearing on this.”<sup>33</sup> And Tolkien’s conviction of the goodness of creation and the evil of destruction permeates his presentation of, on the one hand, Rivendell and Lothlorien and, on the other, Isengard and Mordor. In the Elven lands the water is clear, the air fragrant, nature renewed, song abounds. Representative is Frodo’s hearing the music of Rivendell:

At first the beauty of the melodies and the interwoven words in the Elven-tongue, even though he understood them little, held him in a spell...Almost it seemed that the words took shape, and visions of far lands and bright things that he had never yet imagined opened out before him; and the firelit hall became like a golden mist above the seas of foam that sighed upon the margins of the world.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> 276.

<sup>31</sup> *Hobbit* 301.

<sup>32</sup> Flannery O’Connor, “Novelist and Believer,” *Mystery and Manners* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1961) 157.

<sup>33</sup> O’Connor, 156. In a 2 December 1953 letter to Fr. Robert Murray, S.J. (the grandson of Sir James Murray, founder of the *OED*), Tolkien says that the trilogy “is of course a fundamentally religious and Catholic work; unconsciously so at first, but consciously in the revision.” *Letters* #142.

<sup>34</sup> J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965), 245.

Representative passages that imagistically communicate the connection between evil and autonomy include Sam's seeing Mordor for the first time: "Hard and cruel and bitter was the land...jagged with crags like fangs...grim...a wide lake of darkness dotted with tiny fires...accursed..."<sup>35</sup> Sam overhears a conversation in the tower imprisoning Frodo in which Orcs abuse each other: "Curse you, Snaga, you little maggot!" after which Shagrat threatens to "squeeze" out Snaga's eyes and calls their rival Orcs "swine," and their leader Gorbag "dung."<sup>36</sup> Places, names, and words in Mordor and Isengard are evil; there is no sense of civility in them. They reflect the beings who inhabit these lands and who use this language. No where is this more evident than in the end of Sauron and, thus, of his followers.<sup>37</sup>

With great suffering and after many ordeals, the good defeat the evil, again at great cost. Healing comes to Gondor and to the Shire with the fruits of civility: song, and feasting, speeches and poems, flowers and dance. However, at the end of the trilogy, Frodo cannot stay in the Shire. He must go to the West. But consolation does appear as he approaches the Grey Havens: "on a night of rain Frodo smelled a sweet fragrance on the air and heard the sound of singing that came over the water...he beheld white shores and beyond them a far green country under a swift sunrise."<sup>38</sup>

C. S. Lewis echoes this penetration of the image in order to uncover the real. In his children's books about Narnia, Lewis establishes an explicitly moral framework. Characters' actions result in civility or barbarism. In *The Last Battle*, Lewis, like Tolkien, concretizes the good and the evil in the lands and characters of the novel. The first villain who appears in the novel, not less evil for all his banality, is Shift the Ape who devises the plan to dress the naïve donkey Puzzle in a dead lion's skin and pass him off as Aslan, the Christ-figure of the Narnia books. Shift's motive is to gain power over all the other Narnians, and he succeeds for a while.<sup>39</sup> From the very beginning he is described unpleasantly – the "ugliest, most wrinkled Ape you can imagine," and he takes unfair advantage of Puzzle.<sup>40</sup> In a speech to the deceived talking-animals of Narnia, who believe that he is Aslan's spokesman, Shift explains that he is selling them into what they know is slavery because they'll "make Narnia a country worth living in. There'll be

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<sup>35</sup> J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Return of the King*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965), 175.

<sup>36</sup> *Return...* 181-82.

<sup>37</sup> 227.

<sup>38</sup> 310.

<sup>39</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Last Battle* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1956), 10-11, Chapter III.

<sup>40</sup> Chapter I.

...whips and muzzles and saddles and cages and kennels and prison – Oh, everything.” He browbeats objectors, insisting: “True freedom means doing what I tell you.” And with the power of his rhetoric, he identifies the demon with the Son: “Tash and Aslan are only two different names for you know Who....Tash is Aslan: Aslan is Tash.”<sup>41</sup> Again imagery reveals the truth: Tash is hideous with its “vulture’s head and four arms. Its beak was open and its eyes blazed. A croaking voice came from its beak.”<sup>42</sup> On the other hand, Aslan is the epitome of all of the beauty of the senses: “The sweet air grew suddenly sweeter. A brightness flashed behind...huge and real, the golden Lion....”<sup>43</sup> At the conclusion of this last book in the Narnia series, the real Narnia makes its appearance: “there were forests and green slopes and sweet orchards and flashing waterfalls.”<sup>44</sup> To arrive there the characters have died, but their deaths are triumphant for they result in joy, just as the passage to the West that concludes Tolkien’s trilogy is one of great joy.

In the final book of his space trilogy, Lewis explicitly examines the barbarism of characters and their settings who abandon the Natural Law. In an emblematic passage, an old professor is objecting to the sale of the land of his college in a voice that is “hardly audible.” One of the two major villains of the trilogy, now Lord Feverstone,

sprang to his feet, and looking straight at the old man said in a very loud, clear voice: “If Canon Jewel wishes us *not* to hear his views, I suggest that his end could be better attained by silence.”

Jewel had already been an old man...when old men were treated with kindness, and he had never succeeded in getting used to the modern world.<sup>45</sup>

In this serious examination of the breakdown of a college, a city, and, potentially, the world, this episode is only the first of the many instances of the war on civility waged by the forces of evil. The beautiful peaceful, if internally corrupt, Bracton College with its Bragdon woods containing a “very late British-Roman” well<sup>46</sup> quickly fills up with “a small army of what looked like criminals...noise everywhere...a sort of great tin camp already going on the Common.”<sup>47</sup> Not only do these workingmen destroy the woods, they “pull down the little Norman church” in the

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<sup>41</sup> 30-31.

<sup>42</sup> 124.

<sup>43</sup> 137.

<sup>44</sup> 172.

<sup>45</sup> C. S. Lewis, *That Hideous Strength* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1979), 28.

<sup>46</sup> 21.

<sup>47</sup> 74-75.

village, Edgestow.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, the special police of the National Institute of Co-ordinated Experiments, the NICE, needlessly shoot out “that famous east window on which Henrietta Maria had once cut her name with a diamond,” one of the treasures of Bracton College.<sup>49</sup>

Equally ugly is the abuse of language, one of the most pointed manifestations of the hatred of objective reality by the evil. When Mark Studdock first arrives at the Belbury headquarters of the NICE, he is received by the Deputy Director, John Wither, one of the illuminati in the inner circle: “‘I suppose,’ thought Mark, ‘the old chap is trying to put me at my ease.’ In fact, Mr. Wither’s conversation was having precisely the opposite effect.”<sup>50</sup> Vagueness, obfuscation, and absent-mindedness are among the tools of the NICE’s inner circle by which its members destroy the souls of those who join them, even naively. Murder, torture, imprisonment, cruel experiments on humans and animals, and wholesale destruction of nature are the ways in which the NICE expresses its hatred of free humans and their heterogeneity. The hatred, of course, is hidden behind euphemisms and catch phrases. For example, Feverstone tells Mark:

There’s far too much life of every kind about, animal and vegetable. We haven’t really cleared the place yet. First we couldn’t; and then we had aesthetic and humanitarian scruples; ...the third problem is Man himself. ...

Man has got to take charge of Man. That means, remember, that some Men have got to take charge of the rest.<sup>51</sup>

Another member of the inner circle, Filostrato, reveals even more of the anti-life agenda of the NICE:

I foresee nothing but the *art* tree all over the earth. In fact, we *clean* the planet.... One day we shave the planet....I would not have any birds either. On the art tree I would have the art birds all singing when you press a switch....We do not want the world any longer furred over with organic life...all sprouting and budding and breeding and decaying....Learn to make our brains live with less and less body.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> 80.

<sup>49</sup> 93.

<sup>50</sup> *Hideous...* 52.

<sup>51</sup> 42.

<sup>52</sup> 172-73.

Just before he takes Mark in to see the real Head of the NICE, Filostrato explains how the moon is the model for the “New Man, the man who will not die, the artificial man, free from Nature. Nature is the ladder we have climbed up by, now we kick her away.”<sup>53</sup>

And this real “Head” is indeed a head, that of the guillotined French criminal Francois Alcasin, kept alive, they think, by chemicals and devices. To Filostrato and Straik this is “the creation of God Almighty....It is a man – or a being made by man – who will finally ascend the throne of the universe. And rule forever.”<sup>54</sup> All in the inner circle persist in their hatred of mankind even as the NICE is falling apart. The evil Frost says: “There were not, and must not be, such things as men.”<sup>55</sup> In their solipsism, their presumed autonomy, their commitment to the idea of a utopia with malleable human nature as their material, the members of the inner circle ultimately become indistinguishable from each other even as they hate one another.

Lewis does not allow these forces to be unchallenged. Arrayed against them is an authentic community of free men and women of different temperaments, backgrounds, and talents. Led by Ransom, the protagonist of the first two books of this trilogy, *Out of the Silent Planet* and *Perelandra*, and aided by the restored Merlin, they live in an old and beautiful manor, Saint Anne’s, in which food and drink and talk and music abound even in peril. Unlike both the NICE-occupied Edgestow and Belbury that are fog covered and dark, Saint Anne’s is filled with light and air. After the defeat of the NICE and the destruction of its works, the civility of Saint Anne’s, imagistically embodied in its light, begins to spread throughout the region.

Civility for both Lewis and Tolkien is that for which their protagonists struggle and, sometimes, die. It is never permanently achieved, for each generation is called to follow the Natural Law and to oppose those who deny it. When Sam and Frodo speak of the tales they have heard in the Shire, they see that even though they are two insignificant Hobbits, they are part of these great tales. Frodo says: “...they never end as tales....But the people in them come, and go when their part’s ended. Our part will end...”<sup>56</sup> Similarly, in the on-going battle for civility, J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis have played their part in the great tale that persists today. Their lives, their utterances, and their fiction have been informed by their conviction of the universality of

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<sup>53</sup> *Hideous...* 176-77.

<sup>54</sup> 179.

<sup>55</sup> 357.

<sup>56</sup> *Two Towers* 321,

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the Natural Law. Moreover, their words and images tell all of us that we are part of the continuing struggle for civility against barbarism.

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Published by the Forum on Public Policy

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