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## THE MAGICIAN'S TWIN

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**I**N HIS CLASSIC BOOK *THE ABOLITION OF MAN* (1944), C. S. LEWIS wrote that “[t]he serious magical endeavour and the serious scientific endeavour are twins.”<sup>1</sup>

At first reading, Lewis's observation might seem rather strange. After all, science is supposed to be the realm of the rational, the skeptical, and the objective.

Magic, on the other hand, is supposed to be the domain of the dogmatic, the credulous, and the superstitious. Think of a witch doctor holding sway over a tribe of cannibals deep in a South Sea jungle.

As strange as Lewis's observation might first appear, the comparison between science and magic runs throughout a number of his works. The sinister Uncle Andrew in Lewis's Narnian tale *The Magician's Nephew* is both a magician *and* a scientist; and the bureaucratic conspirators at the National Institute of Co-ordinated Experiments (N.I.C.E.) in Lewis's adult novel *That Hideous Strength* crave the powers of both science and the magician Merlin in their plot to reengineer society.<sup>2</sup>

For all of the obvious differences between science and magic, Lewis is correctly understood that there are at least three important ways in which they are alarmingly similar. More than that, he recognized that these similarities pose a growing threat to the future of civilization as we know it.

## 1. SCIENCE AS RELIGION

THE FIRST WAY SCIENCE AND magic are similar according to Lewis is their ability to function as an alternative religion. A magical view of reality can inspire wonder, mystery, and awe. It can speak to our yearning

for something beyond the daily activities of ordinary life. Even in our technocratic age, the allure of magic in providing meaning to life can be seen in the continuing popularity of *Star Wars*, *The Lord of the Rings*, the Narnian chronicles, and the adventures of Harry Potter. While magical stories tantalize religious and irreligious people alike, for those without conventional religious attachments, they can provide a substitute spiritual reality.

Modern science can offer a similarly powerful alternative to traditional religion. In Lewis's lifetime, the promoter par excellence of this sort of science as religion was popular writer H. G. Wells. Wells and others fashioned Darwin's theory of evolution into a cosmic creation story Lewis variously called "The Scientific Outlook," "Evolutionism," "the myth of evolutionism," and even "Wellsianity."<sup>3</sup> While some contemporary evolutionists contend that people doubt Darwinian theory because it does not tell a good story,<sup>4</sup> Lewis begged to differ. In his view, cosmic evolutionism of the sort propounded by Wells was a dramatic narrative brimful of heroism, pathos, and tragedy.

In a bleak and uncaring universe, the hero (life) magically appears by chance on an insignificant planet against astronomical odds. "Everything seems to be against the infant hero of our drama," commented Lewis, "... just as everything seems against the youngest son or ill-used stepdaughter at the opening of a fairy tale." No matter, "life somehow wins through. With infinite suffering, against all but insuperable obstacles, it spreads, it breeds, it complicates itself, from the amoeba up to the plant, up to the reptile, up to the mammal."<sup>5</sup> In the words of H. G. Wells, "[a]ge by age through gulfs of time at which imagination reels, life has been growing from a mere stirring in the intertidal slime towards freedom, power and consciousness."<sup>6</sup>

Through the epic struggle of survival of the fittest, Man himself finally claws his way to the top of the animal kingdom. Eventually he finds Godhood within his grasp if only he will seize the moment. To quote Wells again: "Man is still only adolescent... we are hardly in the earliest dawn of human greatness... What man has done, the little triumphs of

his present state, and all this history we have told, form but the prelude to the things that man has got to do."<sup>7</sup>

But then, after Man's moment of triumph, tragedy strikes. The sun gradually cools, and life on Earth is obliterated. In Wells's *The Time Machine*, the protagonist reports his vision of the dying Earth millions of years hence: "The darkness grew apace; a cold wind began to blow... From the edge of the sea came a ripple and whisper. Beyond these lifeless sounds the world was silent... All the sounds of man, the bleating of sheep, the cries of birds, the hum of insects, the stir that makes the background of our lives—all that was over."<sup>8</sup>

Lewis explained that he "grew up believing in this Myth and I have felt—I still feel—it's almost perfect grandeur. Let no one say we are an unimaginative age: neither the Greeks nor the Norsemen ever invented a better story." Even now, Lewis added, "in certain moods, I could almost find it in my heart to wish that it was not mythical, but true."<sup>9</sup>

Lewis did not claim that modern science necessitated the kind of blind cosmic evolutionism promoted by H. G. Wells and company. Indeed, in his book *Miracles* he argued that the birth of modern science and its belief in the regularity of nature depended on the Judeo-Christian view of God as Creator: "Men became scientific because they expected Law in Nature, and they expected Law in Nature because they believed in a Legislator."<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, Lewis thought that biology after Darwin provided potent fuel for turning science into a secular religion.

One does not need to look very far to see science being used in the same way today. In 2012 thousands of atheists and agnostics converged on Washington, D.C. for what they called a "Reason Rally."<sup>11</sup> The rally had all the trappings of an evangelistic crusade, but instead of being preached at by a Billy Graham or a Billy Sunday, attendees got to hear Darwinian biologist Richard Dawkins and *Scientific American* columnist Michael Shermer. Former Oxford University professor Dawkins is known for claiming that "Darwin made it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist," while Shermer once wrote an article "Science is My

Savior," which explained how science helped free him from "the stultifying dogma of a 2,000-year-old religion."<sup>12</sup>

The central role Darwinian evolution continues to play for the science-as-religion crowd is readily apparent in the countless "Darwin Day" celebrations held around the globe each year on Feb. 12, Charles Darwin's birthday. Darwin Day is promoted by a group calling itself the International Darwin Day Foundation. Managed by the American Humanist Association, the group's mission is "to encourage the celebration of Science and Humanity" because "[s]cience is our most reliable knowledge system."<sup>13</sup>

According to Amanda Chesworth, one of the co-founders of the Darwin Day movement, the purpose of Darwin Day is to "recognize and pay homage to the indomitable minds and hearts of the people who have helped build the secular cathedrals of verifiable knowledge." Chesworth's word choice is particularly astute: by doing science, scientists in her view are building "secular cathedrals."<sup>14</sup> The iconography of religion is unmistakable. In the words of one Darwin Day enthusiast who posted an approving comment on the official Darwin Day site: "To me, Charles Darwin is more of a God than the one armies had nailed to a cross."<sup>15</sup>

Perhaps the most tireless proponents of cosmic evolutionism today are the husband-and-wife team of Michael Dowd and Connie Barlow, who bill themselves as "America's Evolutionary Evangelists."<sup>16</sup> A former evangelical Christian turned Unitarian minister turned religious "naturalist," Dowd is author of *Thank God for Evolution!*, the subtitle of which is "How the Marriage of Science and Religion Will Transform Your Life and Our World."<sup>17</sup> Dowd calls his brand of cosmic evolutionism the "Great Story," which is defined on the Great Story website as "humanity's sacred narrative of an evolving Universe of emergent complexity and breathtaking creativity—a story that offers each of us the opportunity to find meaning and purpose in our lives and our time in history."<sup>18</sup> The Great Story comes along with its own rituals, parables, hymns, sacred sites, "evolutionary revival" meetings, Sunday School curricula, and even

"cosmic rosaries," necklaces of sacred beads to teach children the fundamental doctrines of cosmic evolutionism.<sup>19</sup>

Dowd has attracted widespread support from Nobel laureates, atheistic evolutionists, and theistic evolutionists. For all of his outreach to the faith community, however, Dowd dismisses the reality of God just as much as atheist biologist Richard Dawkins. In an article written for *Skeptic* magazine, Dowd acknowledged his view that "God" is simply a myth: "God is not a person; God is a personification of one or more deeply significant dimensions of reality."<sup>20</sup> Just as people in the ancient world personified the oceans as the god Poseidon or the sun as the god Sol, contemporary people personify natural forces and call them "God."<sup>21</sup> Hence, Dowd's Great Story is ultimately a drama of the triumph of blind and undirected matter in a universe where a Creator does not actually exist. This becomes explicit in the description of the Great Story provided by philosopher Loyal Rue, cited approvingly on the Great Story website:

In the course of epic events, matter was distilled out of radiant energy, segregated into galaxies, collapsed into stars, fused into atoms, swirled into planets, spliced into molecules, captured into cells, mutated into species, compromised into thought, and cajoled into cultures. All of this (and much more) is what **matter** has done as systems upon systems of organization have emerged over thirteen billion years of creative natural history.<sup>22</sup>

"All of this... is what **matter** has done," not God. Just like the narrative promoted by H. G. Wells and the scientific materialists at the beginning of the twentieth century, the cosmic evolutionism offered by Dowd and his followers in the twenty-first century is ultimately reducible to scientific materialism. The bottom line of their secular creation story is neatly encapsulated by Phillip Johnson: "In the beginning were the particles. And the particles somehow became complex living stuff. And the stuff imagined God, but then discovered evolution."<sup>23</sup>

Lewis would not have been surprised by current efforts to co-opt traditional religion in the name of science, or even to find a lapsed cler-

gyman leading the charge. In Lewis's novel *That Hideous Strength*, the sometime clergyman Straik joins hand-in-hand with the avowed scientific materialists in the name of promoting a new this-wordly religion. As the impassioned Rev. Straik declares to Mark Studdock: "The Kingdom is going to arrive: in this world: in this country. The powers of science are an instrument. An irresistible instrument."<sup>24</sup>

## 2. SCIENCE AS CREDULITY

THE SECOND WAY SCIENCE AND magic are similar according to Lewis is their encouragement of a stunning lack of skepticism. This may seem counterintuitive, since science in the popular imagination is supposed to be based on logic and evidence, while magic is supposed to be based on a superstitious acceptance of claims made in the name of the supernatural. In the words of Richard Dawkins, "[s]cience is based upon verifiable evidence," while "[r]eligious faith" (which Dawkins views as a kind of magic) "not only lacks evidence, its independence from evidence is its pride and joy."<sup>25</sup> Yet as Lewis well knew, scientific thinking no less than magical thinking can spawn a kind of credulity that accepts every kind of explanation no matter how poorly grounded in the facts. In the age of magic, the claims of the witch-doctor were accepted without contradiction. In the age of science, almost anything can be taken seriously if only it is defended in the name of science.

Lewis explained that one of the things he learned by giving talks at Royal Air Force camps during World War II was that the "real religion" of many ordinary Englishmen was a completely uncritical "faith in 'science'."<sup>26</sup> Indeed, he was struck by how many of the men in his audiences "did not really believe that we have any reliable knowledge of historic man. But this was often curiously combined with a conviction that we knew a great deal about Pre-Historic Man: doubtless because Pre-Historic Man is labelled 'Science' (which is reliable) whereas Napoleon or Julius Caesar is labelled as 'History' (which is not)."<sup>27</sup>

But it was not just the "English Proletariat" who exhibited a credulous acceptance of claims made in the name of science according to Lew-

is. In *That Hideous Strength*, when the young sociologist Mark Studdock expresses doubts that N.I.C.E. can effectively propagandize "educated people," the head of N.I.C.E.'s police force, Fairy Hardcastle, responds tartly: "Why you fool, it's the educated reader who *can* be gulled. All our difficulty comes with the others. When did you meet a workman who believes the papers? He takes it for granted that they're all propaganda and skips the leading articles... We have to recondition him. But the educated public, the people who read the highbrow weeklies, don't need reconditioning. They're all right already. They'll believe anything."<sup>28</sup>

For Lewis, two leading examples of scientism-fueled gullibility of the intellectual classes during his own day were Freudianism and evolutionism.

Lewis's interest in Freud dated back to his days as a college student. In his *Surprised by Joy* (1955), he recalled how as an undergraduate "the new Psychology was at that time sweeping through us all. We did not swallow it whole... but we were all influenced."<sup>29</sup> In 1922 he recorded in his diary a discussion with friends saying that "[w]e talked a little of psychoanalysis, condemning Freud."<sup>30</sup> Although skeptical of Freud, Lewis remained intrigued, for a just few weeks later he notes that he was reading Freud's *Introductory Letters on Psychoanalysis*.<sup>31</sup>

A decade later, and shortly after Lewis had become a Christian, Freud made a cameo appearance in *The Pilgrim's Regress* (1933), Lewis's autobiographical allegory of his intellectual and spiritual journey toward Christianity.<sup>32</sup> In Lewis's story, the main character John ends up being arrested and flung into a dungeon by a stand-in for Freud named Sigismund Enlightenment (Sigismund was Sigmund Freud's full first name).<sup>33</sup> The dungeon is overseen by a Giant known as the Spirit of the Age who makes people transparent just by looking at them. As a result, wherever John turns, he sees through his fellow prisoners into their insides. Looking at a woman, he sees through her skull and "into the passages of the nose, and the larynx, and the saliva moving in the glands and the blood in the veins: and lower down the lungs panting like sponges, and the liver, and the intestines like a coil of snakes."<sup>34</sup> Looking at an old

man, John sees the man's cancer growing inside him. And when John turns his head toward himself, he is horrified to observe the inner workings of his own body. After many days of such torment, John cries out in despair: "I am mad. I am dead. I am in hell for ever."<sup>35</sup>

The dungeon is the hell of materialistic reductionism, the attempt to reduce every human trait to an irrational basis, all in the name of modern science. Lewis saw Freud as one of the trailblazers of the reductionist approach. By attempting to uncover the "real" causes of people's religious and cultural beliefs in their subconscious and irrational urges and complexes, Freud eroded not only their humanity, but the authority of rational thought itself.

In the 1940s, Lewis offered an explicit critique of Freudianism in a lecture to the Socratic Club at Oxford. Noting that people used to believe that "if a thing seemed obviously true to a hundred men, then it was probably true in fact," Lewis observed that "[n]owadays the Freudian will tell you to go and analyze the hundred: you will find that they all think Elizabeth [I] a great queen because they all have a mother-complex. Their thoughts are psychologically tainted at the source."<sup>36</sup>

"Now this is obviously great fun," commented Lewis, "but it has not always been noticed that there is a bill to pay for it." If all beliefs are thus tainted at the source and so should be disregarded, then what about Freud's own system of belief? The Freudians "are in the same boat with all the rest of us... They have sawn off the branch they were sitting on."<sup>37</sup> In the name of a scientific study of psychology, the Freudians had undercut the confidence in reason needed for science itself to continue to flourish.<sup>38</sup>

Evolutionism was another prime example of credulous thinking fostered by scientism according to Lewis. As chapter 6 will explain, Lewis did not object in principle to an evolutionary process of common descent, although he was skeptical in practice of certain claims about common descent. But Lewis had no patience for the broader evolutionary idea that matter magically turned itself into complex and conscious living things through a blind and undirected process. Lewis lamented that

"[t]he modern mind accepts as a formula for the universe in general the principle 'Almost nothing may be expected to turn into almost everything' without noticing that the parts of the universe under our direct observation tell a quite different story."<sup>39</sup> Fueled by "Darwinianism," this sort of credulity drew on "a number of false analogies" according to Lewis: "the oak coming from the acorn, the man from the spermatozoon, the modern steamship from the primitive coracle. The supplementary truth that every acorn was dropped by an oak, every spermatozoon derived from a man, and the first boat by something so much more complex than itself as a man of genius, is simply ignored."<sup>40</sup>

Lewis also thought that evolutionism, like Freudianism, promoted a "fatal self-contradiction" regarding the human mind.<sup>41</sup> According to the Darwinian view, "reason is simply the unforeseen and unintended by-product of a mindless process at one stage of its endless and aimless becoming." Lewis pointed out the fundamental difficulty with this claim: "If my own mind is a product of the irrational—if what seem my clearest reasonings are only the way in which a creature conditioned as I am is bound to feel—how shall I trust my mind when it tells me about Evolution?" He added that "[t]he fact that some people of scientific education cannot by any effort be taught to see the difficulty, confirms one's suspicion that we here touch a radical disease in their whole style of thought."<sup>42</sup>

Although science is supposed to be based on logic, evidence, and critical inquiry, Lewis understood that it could be easily misused to promote uncritical dogmatism, and he lived during an era in which this kind of misuse of science was rampant. Consider the burgeoning "science" of eugenics, the effort to breed better human beings by applying Darwinian principles of selection through imprisonment, forced sterilization, immigration restrictions, and other methods. Generally regarded today as pseudoscience, eugenics originated with noted British scientist Francis Galton (Charles Darwin's cousin), and it found widespread popularity in Lewis's day among elites in England, the United States, and Germany. Eugenics was the consensus view of the scientific community during

much of Lewis's lifetime, and those who opposed it were derided as anti-science reactionaries or religious zealots standing in the way of progress. In America, its champions included members of the National Academy of Sciences and evolutionary biologists at the nation's top research universities.<sup>43</sup> In Britain, noted eugenists included evolutionary biologist Julian Huxley, grandson of "Darwin's Bulldog" Thomas Henry Huxley. Julian Huxley complained that in civilized societies "the elimination of defect by natural selection is largely... rendered inoperative by medicine, charity, and the social services." As a result, "[h]umanity will gradually destroy itself from within, will decay in its very core and essence, if this slow but relentless process is not checked."<sup>44</sup>

The United States holds the dubious honor of enacting the world's first compulsory eugenics sterilization law, but it was Nazi Germany that pursued eugenics with special rigor in the 1930s and 40s. Not content with merely sterilizing hundreds of thousands of the so-called "unfit," Nazi doctors eventually started killing handicapped persons en masse in what turned out to be a practice run for Hitler's extermination campaign against the Jews.<sup>45</sup>

The horrors of Nazi eugenics effectively killed off enthusiasm for eugenics in the mainstream scientific community after World War II. But there were other cases where scientific elites showed a similarly breathtaking lack of skepticism during this period. In the field of human evolution, much of the scientific community was hoodwinked for two generations into accepting the infamous Piltdown skull as a genuine "missing link" between humans and their ape-like ancestors before the fossil was definitively exposed as a forgery in 1953 (much to Lewis's private amusement).<sup>46</sup> In the field of medicine, the lobotomy was embraced as a miracle cure by large parts of the medical community well into the 1950s, and the scientist who pioneered the operation in human beings even won a Nobel Prize for his efforts in 1949. Only after tens of thousands of individuals had been lobotomized (including children) did healthy skepticism begin to prevail.<sup>47</sup> And in the field of human sexuality, Darwinian zoologist Alfred Kinsey's studies on human sex practices were accepted

uncritically by fellow researchers and social scientists for decades despite the fact that his wildly unrepresentative samples and coercive interview techniques made his research little more than junk science.<sup>48</sup>

If scientists themselves could demonstrate such stunning bouts of credulity about scientific claims, members of the general public were even more susceptible to the disease according to Lewis. In an age of science and technology, Lewis knew that ordinary citizens must increasingly look to scientific experts for answers, and that would likely lead people to defer more and more to the scientists, letting the scientists do their thinking for them and neglecting their own responsibilities for critical thought in the process.

Lewis knew firsthand the dangers of simply deferring to scientific claims, recalling that his own atheistic "rationalism was inevitably based on what I believed to be the findings of the sciences, and those findings, not being a scientist, I had to take on trust—in fact, on authority."<sup>49</sup> Lewis understood that the ironic result of a society based on science might be greater credulity, not less, as more people simply accepted scientific claims on the basis of authority. This was already happening in his view. Near the end of his life, Lewis observed that "the ease with which a scientific theory assumes the dignity and rigidity of fact varies inversely with the individual's scientific education," which is why when interacting "with wholly uneducated audiences" he "sometimes found matter which real scientists would regard as highly speculative more firmly believed than many things within our real knowledge."<sup>50</sup> In Lewis's view, the increasing acquiescence of non-scientists to those with scientific and technical expertise gave rise to by far the most dangerous similarity between science and magic, one that threatened the future of Western civilization itself.

### 3. SCIENCE AS POWER

THE THIRD AND MOST SIGNIFICANT way science is similar to magic according to Lewis is its quest for power. Magic wasn't just about understanding the world; it was about controlling it. The great wizard or

sorcerer sought power over nature. Similarly, science from the beginning was not just the effort to understand nature, but the effort to control it. "For magic and applied science alike the problem is how to subdue reality to the wishes of men," wrote Lewis. In pursuit of that objective, both magicians and scientists "are ready to do things hitherto regarded as disgusting and impious—such as digging up and mutilating the dead."<sup>51</sup>

Of course, there is a critically important difference between science and magic: Science works, while magic is relegated today to the pages of the fairy tale. Science cures diseases. Science increases food production. Science puts men on the moon and ordinary people in jet planes. Science fills our homes with computers, iPhones, and microwave ovens. Herein lies the great temptation of modern science to modern man. The world as we know it faces apparently insurmountable evils from hunger to disease to crime to war to ecological devastation. Science offers the hope of earthly salvation through the limitless creativity of human ingenuity—or so the prophets of scientism have claimed over the past century, including H. G. Wells and evolutionary biologists J. B. S. Haldane and Julian Huxley during C. S. Lewis's own day. Haldane viewed science as "man's gradual conquest, first of space and time, then of matter as such, then of his own body and those of other living beings, and finally the subjugation of the dark and evil elements in his own soul,"<sup>52</sup> and he urged his fellow scientists to no longer be "passively involved in the torrent of contemporary history, but actively engaged in changing society and shaping the world's future."<sup>53</sup>

C. S. Lewis was not persuaded. In his view, the scientific utopians failed to take into account the moral vacuum at the heart of contemporary science. Lewis stressed that he was not anti-science; but he still worried that modern science was ill-founded from the start: "It might be going too far to say that the modern scientific movement was tainted from its birth: but I think it would be true to say that it was born in an unhealthy neighbourhood and at an inauspicious hour."<sup>54</sup> Lewis noted that modern science attempts to conquer nature by demystifying its parts and reducing them to material formulas by which they can be controlled.

The results of this materialistic reductionism are often laudable (e.g., antibiotics, personal computers, and the invention of airplanes). Nevertheless, when the conquest of nature is turned on man himself, a problem arises: "[A]s soon as we take the final step of reducing our own species to the level of mere Nature, the whole process is stultified, for this time the being who stood to gain and the being who has been sacrificed are one and the same."<sup>55</sup> By treating human beings as the products of blind non-rational forces, scientific reductionism eliminates man as a rational moral agent. In Lewis's words, "[m]an's final conquest has proved to be the abolition of Man."<sup>56</sup>

Lewis worried that scientism's reductionist view of the human person would open the door wide to the scientific manipulation of human beings. "[I]f man chooses to treat himself as raw material," he wrote, "raw material he will be: not raw material to be manipulated, as he fondly imagined, by himself, but by mere appetite, that is, mere Nature, in the person of his dehumanized Conditioners."<sup>57</sup> Lewis thought there would be no effective limits on human manipulation in the scientific age because scientism undermined the authority of the very ethical principles needed to justify such limits. According to scientism, old cultural rules (such as "Man has no right to play God" or "punishment should be proportionate to the crime") were simply the byproducts of a blind evolutionary process and could be disregarded or superseded as needed. Thus, any restrictions on the application of science to human affairs ultimately would be left to the personal whims of the elites.

Lewis's concern about the powerful impact of scientism on society was detectible already in *Dymer* (1926) and *The Pilgrim's Regress* (1933), but by the late 1930s and early 1940s his alarm was on full display in his science fiction trilogy, which he continued to publish as the world plunged into another world war. It is significant that Lewis spent World War II writing not about the dangers of Nazism or communism (even though he detested both), but about the dangers of scientism and its effort to abolish man.<sup>58</sup> Scientism was a greater threat in Lewis's view than fascism or communism because it infected representative democra-

cies like Britain no less than totalitarian societies: "The process which, if not checked, will abolish Man, goes on apace among Communists and Democrats no less than among Fascists." Lewis acknowledged that "[t]he methods may (at first) differ in brutality" between scientism and totalitarianism, but he went on to make a shocking claim: "[M]any a mild-eyed scientist in pince-nez, many a popular dramatist, many an amateur philosopher in our midst, means in the long run just the same as the Nazi rulers of Germany."<sup>59</sup>

That message lies at the heart of Lewis's novel *That Hideous Strength*, written in 1942 and 1943, but not published until 1945.<sup>60</sup> As previously mentioned, *That Hideous Strength* tells the story of a sinister conspiracy to turn England into a scientific utopia. The vehicle of transformation is to be a lavishly funded new government bureaucracy with the deceptively innocuous name of the National Institute for Co-ordinated Experiments, or N.I.C.E. for short.<sup>61</sup> Of course, there is nothing nice about N.I.C.E. Its totalitarian goal is to meld the methods of modern science with the coercive powers of government in order "to take control of our own destiny" and "make man a really efficient animal." The Institute's all-encompassing agenda reads like a wish list drawn up by the era's leading scientific utopians: "sterilization of the unfit, liquidation of backward races (we don't want any dead weights), selective breeding," and "real education," which means "biochemical conditioning... and direct manipulation of the brain."<sup>62</sup> N.I.C.E.'s agenda also includes scientific experimentation on both animals and criminals. The animals would be "cut up like paper on the mere chance of some interesting discovery," while the criminals would no longer be punished but cured, even if their "remedial treatment" must continue indefinitely.<sup>63</sup>

Lewis lampoons the scientific bureaucrats running N.I.C.E., and he relishes pointing out just how narrow-minded and parochial they are for all of their supposed sophistication. This comes out clearly when Mark Studdock and a fellow researcher from the sociology branch of N.I.C.E. (Cosser) visit a picturesque country village in order to write a report advocating its demolition. Mark, who is not quite as far down the path of

scientism as Cosser, feels like he is "on a holiday" while visiting the village, enjoying the natural beauty of the sunny winter day, relaxing at a pub for a drink, and feeling the aesthetic attraction of historic English architecture. Cosser is impervious to such things, placing no value on anything outside his narrow field of sociological expertise. Instead of delighting in the beauty of nature, Cosser complains about the "[b]loody awful noise those birds make."<sup>64</sup> Instead of enjoying a drink at the pub, he complains about the lack of ventilation and suggests that the alcohol could be "administered in a more hygienic way." When Mark suggests that Cosser is missing the point of the pub as a gathering place for food and fellowship, Cosser replies "Don't know, I'm sure... Nutrition isn't my subject. You'd want to ask Stock about that." When Mark mentions that the village has "its pleasant side" and that they need to make sure that whatever it is replaced with is something better in all areas, "not merely in efficiency," Cosser again pleads that this is outside his area. "Oh, architecture and all that," he replies. "Well, that's hardly my line, you know. That's more for someone like Wither. Have you nearly finished?"<sup>65</sup> A hyper-specialist, Cosser can't see past his proverbial nose. Yet he is being given the power to decide whether to dispossess members of an entire village from their homes.<sup>66</sup>

*That Hideous Strength* resonated with the public, and it quickly became Lewis's most popular adult novel, despite negative reviews from critics, including one from J. B. S. Haldane, who thought the novel was a blatant attack on science.<sup>67</sup> It is easy to understand why the public of the 1940s might have been receptive to the novel's message. Two world wars and the rise of totalitarianism in Germany and Russia had dampened popular enthusiasm for the message of the scientific utopians. After all, it was hard to view science as savior when scientists were busy bringing forth poison gas, the V-2 rocket, and the atomic bomb—not to mention new methods of killing the handicapped in the name of eugenics in Germany. To many people, the new age ushered in by science looked more like a nightmare than a paradise.

After World War II, however, even the looming threat of nuclear annihilation did not prevent some from renewing their quest for societal salvation through science, and scientific utopianism began to revive. At the global level, Julian Huxley called for bringing about a better future by promoting “scientific world humanism, global in extent and evolutionary in background,”<sup>68</sup> while in America renewed optimism toward science was exemplified by icons of pop culture such as Walt Disney’s “Tomorrowland” in Disneyland, *The Jetsons* cartoon series, and the 1962 World’s Fair in Seattle, which celebrated the seemingly endless possibilities of the science-led world of “Century 21.”

For his part, Lewis continued to sound the alarm about the dangers of what he variously called “technocracy” or “scientocracy”—government in the name of science that is disconnected from the traditional limits of both morality and a free society.<sup>69</sup> Lewis’s most eloquent post-war statement on the subject came in the article “Willing Slaves of the Welfare State,” published in *The Observer* in 1958. In that essay, Lewis worried that we were seeing the rise of a “new oligarchy [that] must more and more base its claim to plan us on its claim to knowledge... This means they must increasingly rely on the advice of scientists, till in the end the politicians proper become merely the scientists’ puppets.”<sup>70</sup> Lewis believed that the world’s desperate ills of “hunger, sickness, and the dread of war” would make people all too willing to accept an “omnipotent global technocracy,” even if it meant surrendering their freedoms. “Here is a witch-doctor who can save us from the sorcerers—a war-lord who can save us from the barbarians—a Church that can save us from Hell. Give them what they ask, give ourselves to them bound and blindfold, if only they will!”<sup>71</sup>

Lewis did not deny that scientific and technical knowledge might be needed to solve our current problems. But he challenged the claim that scientists had the right to rule merely because of their superior technical expertise. Scientific knowledge may be necessary for good public policy in certain areas, but Lewis knew that it was hardly sufficient. Political problems are preeminently moral problems, and scientists are ill-

equipped to function as moralists according to Lewis: “Let scientists tell us about sciences. But government involves questions about the good for man, and justice, and what things are worth having at what price; and on these a scientific training gives a man’s opinion no added value.”<sup>72</sup>

Lewis’s warnings about the threat of scientocracy could have come from the latest headlines. Since the 1990s there has been a dramatic increase in what some have called the “authoritarian tone” of science, exemplified by the growing use in science journalism during this period of phrases such as “science requires,” “science dictates,” and “science tells us we should.”<sup>73</sup> The changes in journalism track with similar developments in politics and public policy. Whether the topic be embryonic stem cell research, climate change, health insurance mandates, the teaching of evolution, or any number of other topics, “science” is increasingly being used as a trump card in public debates to suppress dissent and curtail discussion. Regardless of the issue, experts assert that their public policy positions are dictated by “science,” which means that anyone who disagrees with them is “anti-science.”

The conflict over government funding for embryonic stem cell research is a perfect example. Oppose taxpayer funding for embryonic stem cell research, and you are guaranteed to be labeled “anti-science” as well as a religious fanatic. However, this storyline of enlightened scientists vs. intolerant fundamentalists opposed to research obscures the complexities of the actual debate. First, there are plenty of scientific (as opposed to ethical or religious) objections to the efficacy of embryonic stem cell research; these are conveniently ignored by framing the dispute as science vs. anti-science.<sup>74</sup> Second, raising ethical questions about certain kinds of scientific research makes one “anti-science” only if one accepts scientism’s premise that science is the one valid form of knowledge in the public square and scientific research therefore should operate free from any outside restrictions whatever. According to this mindset, opposition to the infamous Tuskegee syphilis experiments or Nazi medical experimentation on Jews would make one “anti-science.” But that is ridiculous. Practicing science does not require operating in a

moral vacuum, and raising ethical objections to some forms of scientific research does not make one "anti-science."

A similar situation exists in the debate over climate change. Question any part of the climate change "consensus" (how much climate change is going on, how much humans contribute to it, or what should humans do about it), and one is instantly declared "anti-science" or even a threat to the future of the human race. The goal of this kind of rhetoric is not to win by persuading others, but by silencing them.

Along with the growing use of science as a trump card, we are seeing the revival of scientific justifications for eugenics under the banners of "Transhumanism" (see chapter 10) and "reprogenetics." The latter term was coined by Princeton University biologist Lee Silver, who urges human beings to take control of their evolution and evolve themselves into a higher race of beings with god-like powers.<sup>75</sup> Although Silver is concerned that the supposed blessings of genetic engineering might not be equally distributed across the population,<sup>76</sup> he nonetheless urges us to seize the opportunity: "[H]uman beings... now have the power not only to control but to create new genes for themselves. Why not seize this power? Why not control what has been left to chance in the past?<sup>77</sup> "Transhumanism" and "reprogenetics" may still sound like science fiction to many people, but eugenic abortions targeting children with genetic defects are already well under way. In 2012, physician Nancy Synderman, chief medical editor for NBC News, publicly defended eugenic abortions on national television squarely on the basis of science: "I am pro-science, so I believe that this is a great way to prevent diseases."<sup>78</sup> Of course, if it is "pro-science" to support eradicating babies with genetic flaws, it must be "anti-science" to oppose it.

For the moment, the new eugenics is focused more on encouraging individuals to willingly breed a better race than on imposing top-down measures, but the use of science as a justification for coercion is on the upswing as well:

- In the name of saving the planet from global warming, British scientist James Lovelock has called for the suspension of democracy: "Even the best democracies agree that when a major war approaches, democracy must be put on hold for the time being. I have a feeling that climate change may be an issue as severe as a war. It may be necessary to put democracy on hold for a while."<sup>79</sup>
- In the name of promoting biodiversity, evolutionary zoologist Eric Pianka at the University of Texas urges the reduction of the Earth's human population by up to 90% and calls on the government to confiscate all the earnings of any couple who have more than two children. "You should have to pay more when you have your first kid—you pay more taxes," he insists. "When you have your second kid you pay a lot more taxes, and when you have your third kid you don't get anything back, they take it all."<sup>80</sup>
- In order to achieve the admittedly laudable goal of ending obesity, Harvard evolutionary biologist Daniel Lieberman advocates coercive measures by the government to control our diets. Lieberman argues that coercion is necessary because evolutionary biology shows us that we cannot control our sugar intake on our own power. "We have evolved to need coercion."<sup>81</sup>
- When the Obama administration mandated that many private religious employers include contraceptives and even certain kinds of abortion drugs as part of their health care plans, the abrogation of religious liberty rights was justified in the name of science. "Scientists have abundant evidence that birth control has significant health benefits for women," declared Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius, defending the mandate.<sup>82</sup>

Lewis's age of scientocracy has come upon us with a vengeance. Now we need to figure out what to do about it.

### A REGENERATE SCIENCE?

LEWIS PROVIDES A HINT AS to what will be required to overcome scientism in his Narnian story *The Magician's Nephew*. Despite its title, there are actually two magicians in the story. The first, Uncle Andrew, embodies the longing to fuse science with magic. Although a magician, Uncle Andrew is also a scientist. He has a microscope, and he experiments on animals.<sup>83</sup> By pursuing power over nature without regard to ethics, Uncle Andrew sets in motion a train of events that ultimately brings a far greater magician, Queen Jadis, into both Earth and Narnia, which she thereupon threatens to enslave. Jadis previously destroyed her own world, Charn, after using her knowledge of "the Deplorable Word" to liquidate the entire population of the planet. The "Deplorable Word" was a secret formula "which, if spoken with the proper ceremonies, would destroy all living things except the one who spoke it." Previous rulers of Charn had pledged never to seek knowledge of the formula, but Jadis violated her oath, and when faced with defeat in battle, she decided to use the word.<sup>84</sup>

Jadis is ultimately thwarted in her effort to take over new worlds, not by the actions of a fellow magician, but by the repentance of a young boy, Digory. Digory's unconstrained curiosity previously had brought Jadis out of a deep sleep. In order to undo the harm brought about by awakening Jadis, Digory promises Aslan, the Creator of Narnia, that he will journey to a garden on top of the mountains where he will pick a magical apple and bring it back to Aslan. When Digory arrives at the garden, he finds Jadis already there, having gorged herself on one of the apples despite a sign forbidding people to take apples for themselves. Jadis then urges Digory to disregard his promise to Aslan and take an apple for his dying mother, assuring him that the apple will heal her of her illness. Even when Jadis accuses Digory of being "heartless" for not being willing to save his own mother, Digory rebuffs the temptation to break faith

with Aslan. As a result of Digory's unwillingness to cooperate with her evil scheme, Jadis and her evil power are kept in check for many centuries.<sup>85</sup>

*The Magician's Nephew* was written during the 1950s, the very period when Lewis's concerns about an "omnicompetent global technocracy" continued to grow. Jadis clearly represents the dangers of scientism. Her use of the "Deplorable Word" in her own world is perhaps a commentary on the age of nuclear weapons and our own efforts to develop ever more powerful weapons of mass destruction. After Aslan says that humans should take warning from the destruction of Charn, Digory's friend Polly says: "But we're not quite as bad as that world, are we, Aslan?" Aslan responds: "Not yet. But you are growing more like it. It is not certain that some wicked one of your race will not find out a secret as evil as the Deplorable Word and use it to destroy all living things." Aslan then tells Digory and Polly that "before you are an old man and an old woman, great nations in your world will be ruled by tyrants who care no more for joy and justice and mercy than the Empress Jadis. Let your world beware."<sup>86</sup> Since *The Magician's Nephew* is set in the early 1900s, Aslan is undoubtedly referring to the two world wars and subsequent "Cold War" that loomed on the horizon, all of which would be accompanied by horrifying new uses of science and technology to kill and manipulate humanity.<sup>87</sup>

In *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis expressed his hope that a reformation of science could be brought about by scientists. But he made clear that the task was too important to be left to them alone: "[I]f the scientists themselves cannot arrest this process before it reaches the common Reason and kills that too, then someone else must arrest it."<sup>88</sup> In a free society, scientism requires the cooperation of scientists and non-scientists alike to prevail, and it requires the cooperation of both scientists and non-scientists to be defeated.

Like Digory, people today need the courage and independence of thought to stand up to the magicians of scientism. They need to be willing to ask questions, challenge assumptions, and defend a broader view

of rationality than that permitted by scientific materialism. Whether the issue is climate change, embryonic stem cell research, genetic engineering, evolution and intelligent design, or something else, it is not enough to simply acquiesce in the current "climate of opinion" in science or anything else, as Lewis himself well knew. "I take a very low view of 'climates of opinion,'" he commented, noting that "[i]n his own subject every man knows that all discoveries are made and all errors corrected by those who ignore the 'climate of opinion.'"<sup>89</sup>

At the end of *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis issued a call for a "regenerate science" that would seek to understand human beings and other living things as they really are, not try to reduce them to automatons. "When it explained it would not explain away. When it spoke of the parts it would remember the whole. While studying the *It* it would not lose what Martin Buber calls the *Thou*-situation."<sup>90</sup>

Lewis was not quite sure what he was asking for, and he was even less sure that it could come to pass. Yet in recent decades we have begun to see glimmers. New developments in biology, physics, and cognitive science are raising serious doubts about the most fundamental tenets of scientific materialism. In physics, our understanding of matter itself is becoming increasingly non-material.<sup>91</sup> In biology, scientists are discovering how irreducibly complex biological systems and information encoded in DNA are pointing to the reality of intelligent design in nature.<sup>92</sup> In cognitive science, efforts to reduce mind to the physical processes of the brain continue to fail, and new research is providing evidence that the mind is a non-reducible reality that must be accepted on its own terms.<sup>93</sup> What George Gilder has called "the materialist superstition" is being challenged as never before.<sup>94</sup>

Nearly 50 years after C. S. Lewis's death, we are facing the possibility that science can become something more than the magician's twin. Even in the face of surging scientism in the public arena, an opportunity has opened to challenge scientism on the basis of science itself, fulfilling Lewis's own desire that "from Science herself the cure might come."<sup>95</sup>

Let us hope we find the clarity and courage to make the most of the opportunity.

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# THE MAGICIAN'S TWIN

C. S. LEWIS ON SCIENCE,  
SCIENTISM, AND SOCIETY

JOHN G. WEST, EDITOR

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### Description

Beloved for his Narnian tales and his books of Christian apologetics, best-selling author C.S. Lewis also was a prophetic critic of the growing power of scientism, the misguided effort to apply science to areas outside its proper bounds. In this wide-ranging book of essays, contemporary writers probe Lewis's warnings about the dehumanizing impact of scientism on ethics, politics, faith, reason, and science itself. Issues explored include Lewis's views on bioethics, eugenics, evolution, intelligent design, and what he called "scientocracy."

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For Sonja, Katherine, and Garrett.

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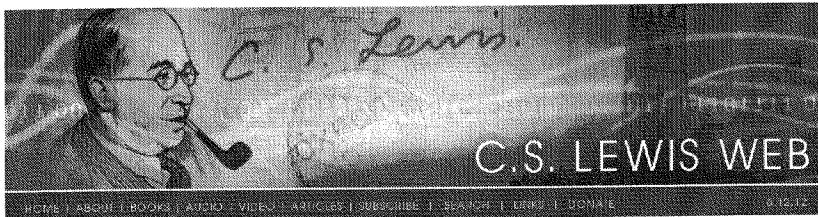
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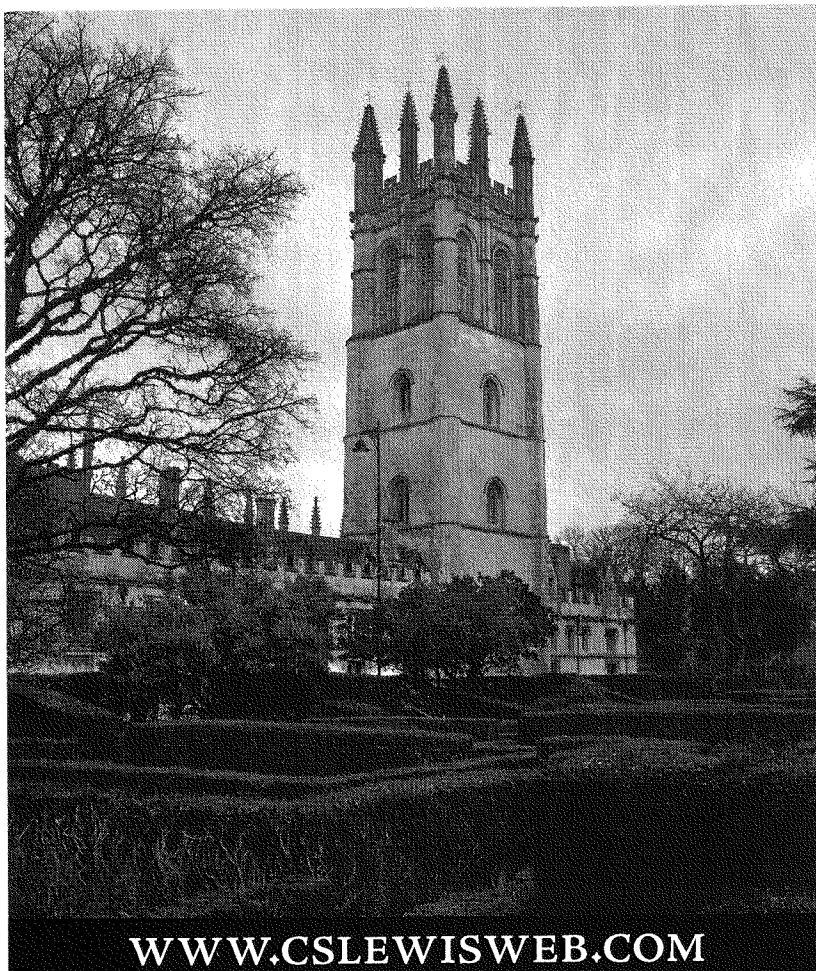
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