

The Re-Enchantment of Education: C. S. Lewis's Idea of the Holy¹

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The rationale for a liberal arts education is not immediately obvious to many today, although a regular claim forwarded is that such an education offers students critical thinking skills. The liberal arts education, which in practice too often looks simply like a disconnected distribution of courses in various subjects, not all of which have an explicit connection to a student's chosen major or intended career path, is thus defended as a way to sharpen students' analytical abilities, allowing them to see through their initial presuppositions. John Dewey, one of the early and most influential supporters of this pedagogical emphasis, defined critical thinking as "suspended judgment," a way to "determine the nature of the problem before proceeding to attempt at its solution."² There may be much to gain from such emphases, yet when C. S. Lewis perceived that the habit known today as "critical thinking" was becoming the *predominant* motivation for modern education, he was troubled. For Lewis, an ability to think critically, or logically, is undoubtedly a natural result of an authentic education. However, his treatise on education, *The Abolition of Man* (1944), suggests that when an effort to become intellectually neutral or detached becomes the primary justification for education, the liberal arts and education per se are abandoned. Prior to the rigors of critical thinking, Lewis argues for a more foundational justification and motivation, which we might call reverence.

Of course, "reverence" holds religious connotations, and when Lewis wrote *The Abolition of Man*, he insisted that his philosophy of education need not be understood as an argument for theism.³ Nonetheless, a disposition of reverence is what Lewis believes a good education requires. He suggests that without a reverence for objective moral realities that transcend both the individual and the community, education ultimately dissolves into a set of utilitarian practices focused exclusively on utilitarian ends. The liberal arts university's traditional presumption that there can be such a thing as full human flourishing beyond mere functionalism would cease to exist. An unrecognized influence on Lewis's educational philosophy is a book remembered in part because Lewis championed it. In 1962, *The Christian Century* inquired of Lewis which books most influenced his thought. Along with some expected sources—G. K. Chesterton, George MacDonald, poets like Virgil and Wordsworth—he also included the early twentieth-century German Lutheran theologian and phenomenologist Rudolf Otto.⁴ The book was *Das*

¹ This essay is based on a lecture presented to the Pi Gamma Mu Social Science Honors Club at Southwestern College. An earlier version was presented to the Lutheran Society at Hillsdale College.

² John Dewey, *How We Think* (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, 1997), 74.

³ C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man, or Reflections on Education with Special Reference to the Teaching of English in the Upper Forms of Schools* (New York: Harper Collins, 2001), 49.

⁴ David Werther and Susan Werther, *C. S. Lewis's List: The Ten Books That Influenced Him Most* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2015), 1-2.

Heilige (1917), known in English as *The Idea of the Holy*.⁵ Lewis first encountered the work in 1936, and he directly cites Otto in his theodicean *The Problem of Pain* (1940).⁶ Lewis once again confirms his interest in *The Idea of the Holy* in a subsequent letter to Corbin Scott Carnell (1958), in which he says that he has “been deeply influenced by” Otto’s thought.⁷ However, the nature of *The Idea of the Holy*’s influence on Lewis’s writings has not been fully noticed.⁸ Here I wish, in particular, to consider how Otto’s thought shapes Lewis’s educational philosophy as expressed in *The Abolition of Man*. It is in Otto’s treatment of “the holy” that I think we can find an essential component to Lewis’s views on education.

Lewis’s argument in *The Abolition of Man* has been explained at length elsewhere, yet a few words are warranted here. For Lewis, modern educational methods, as represented by theorists like Dewey and the priority progressive education gives to the development of critical thinking skills, encourage a disenchantment of the world, and this disenchantment leads to the eponymous “abolition” of the human condition. To put it another way, modern education, which on the surface presumes to champion the individual, reduces the individual’s humanity to a utilitarian function through its emphasis on subjective experience and critique. The seeming paradox that to value the individual is actually to reduce the individual is the central thrust of Lewis’s argument. By relying on the work of Rudolf Otto, Lewis promotes instead the importance of what he calls a “doctrine of objective value.”⁹ Lewis names this “doctrine” the Tao, a “way” that he articulates explicitly in opposition to an educational system that prioritizes the individual-orienting habits of critical thinking. I suggest that it is through Otto’s influence on Lewis that we can see how his emphasis on a “doctrine of objective value” entails the necessary cultivation of a religious disposition. We might modify Lewis’s already provocative thesis, then, to say that education, in order to be true education, must promote this minimally religious disposition of reverence toward the world.

Interpreting Otto

Some explanation of Otto’s argument will be necessary to better understand Lewis’s use of Otto. *The Idea of the Holy* is an attempt to reclaim for theology the category of the non-rational, or the apophatic. While other faith traditions may have retained a robust apophatic theology, Otto sees his own Lutheran tradition at risk of losing this traditional attention to mystery, the non-rational, or the supra-rational. He by no means wishes to identify theology completely with the non-rational, such that reason and philosophy could have no truck with theology. On the contrary, *The Idea of the Holy* was written after his book *Naturalism and*

⁵ All citations are from Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, trans. John W. Harvey, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1950).

⁶ Werther and Werther, *C. S. Lewis’s List*, 113-34.

⁷ Walter Hooper, ed., *The Collected Letters of C.S. Lewis*, vol. 3 (New York: Harper Collins, 2007), 980.

⁸ Even one of the most recent direct consideration of Otto’s influence on Lewis curiously doubts Lewis’s ability to judge Otto’s influence; Adam Barkman suggests, “Perhaps Lewis, being put on the spot, could not remember another book that was a more important influence (I might suggest a few)” (Adam Barkman, “Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*,” in Werther and Werther, *C. S. Lewis’s List*, 132).

⁹ Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*, 18.

Religion, in which he treated what he calls the “rational aspect of the supreme Reality we call ‘God.’”¹⁰ Furthermore, Otto begins *The Idea of the Holy* by explaining that it is only through reason that belief becomes even a possibility, rather than merely a feeling.¹¹

Perhaps because of his respect for reason’s role in theological study, coupled with his position within the academic discipline of theology, Otto worries that the academic treatment of theology easily slides into either the “bias of rationalization” or “metaphysical speculation.”¹² Otto offers instead a phenomenological account of the practices and claims of religion, which would seem to avoid the kind of ontotheology later critiqued by Martin Heidegger and Jean-Luc Marion. *The Idea of the Holy* is his extended effort to define and offer analogies for the holiness of God, since for Otto “holiness” is the quality of God that is non-rational or supra-rational. The difficulty of his project, naturally, is that the non-rational is by definition ineffable. The non-rational by definition cannot be conceptualized. Still, Otto uses this quality of ineffability as part of the necessary, and previously commonsense, definition of holiness. He asserts that we cannot with Kant identify holiness with moral perfection exclusively. To be fully “good,” in the sense of a moral or legal uprightness, is not the same as being “holy.” Holiness includes goodness, but it also requires the quality of otherness.¹³

Relying on the Hebrew notion of holiness as that which is separate, Otto calls this element of separateness “a clear overplus of meaning,” and he famously coins the word “numinous” to name this “overplus.”¹⁴ While moral perfection might be imagined and explained, the otherness of the holy is ineffable. Still, it is possible to say that part of the definition of holiness is that it cannot be fully defined; this is the function of Otto’s coinage. While we do not apprehend the otherness of the holy rationally, Otto believes we can intuit its presence. Furthermore, we can rely on traditional religious treatments of the divine to describe it phenomenologically. Otto thus attempts a series of phenomenological descriptions of holiness, using comparative religion and the history of literature in order to demonstrate how the divine presence has been depicted as containing this numinal quality. His descriptions, because they are dealing with the non-rational, are primarily affective, attempting to describe the feeling of holiness—or in his words, “the nature of the numinous can only be suggested by means of the special way in which it is reflected in the mind in terms of feeling.”¹⁵ For example, in his first attempt to describe the presence of holiness, Otto identifies a sensation of that lies beyond a “feeling of dependence.” He describes Abraham’s attempt to save the men of Sodom from divine destruction—“Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes” (Genesis 18:27)—as a “self-confessed, ‘feeling of dependence,’ which is yet at the same time far more than, and something other than, merely a feeling of dependence.” Otto names this

¹⁰ Otto, Forward to *The Idea of the Holy*.

¹¹ *The Idea of the Holy*, 1.

¹² *Ibid.*, 3, 214.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 12.

feeling “creature-feeling” or “creature-consciousness,” which he defines as “the emotion of a creature, submerged and overwhelmed by its own nothingness in contrast to that which is supreme above all creatures.”¹⁶ So while the numinous may not be fully rationalized, Otto suggest that it can be felt or sensed. Abraham’s expressed “creature-consciousness” indicates the phenomenon of the experience of holiness.

It was C. S. Lewis who took Otto’s coinage, the numinous, and popularized it before his large and international audience. Lewis’s book *The Problem of Pain* offers a series of definitions by example:

Suppose you were told there was a tiger in the next room: you would know that you were in danger and would probably feel fear. But if you were told, “There is a ghost in the next room,” and believed it, you would feel, indeed, what is often called fear, but of a different kind. It would not be based on the knowledge of danger, for no one is primarily afraid of what a ghost may do to him, but of the mere fact that it is a ghost. It is “uncanny” rather than dangerous, and the special kind of fear it excites may be called Dread. With the Uncanny one has reached the fringes of the Numinous. Now suppose that you were told simply “There is a mighty spirit in the room,” and believed it. Your feelings would then be even less like the mere fear of danger: but the disturbance would be profound. You would feel wonder and a certain shrinking—a sense of inadequacy to cope with such a visitant and of prostration before it—an emotion which might be expressed in Shakespeare’s words, “Under it my genius is rebuked.” This feeling may be described as awe, and the object which excites it as the *Numinous*.¹⁷

Lewis’s description here accords closely to Otto’s own descriptive efforts. While “creature-consciousness” is Otto’s initial description of a response to the numinous, Otto also extends his definition of the appropriate feeling-response with the phrase *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*. In his efforts to unpack the two adjectives describing *mysterium*, Otto argues that the presence of holiness combines the same feelings of inadequacy and awe that Lewis appeals to in *The Problem of Pain*. In doing so, both Otto and Lewis wager that their audience has had inexplicable experiences that resonate with these descriptions. While regularly employing the tools of logic, they seek first to appeal to affective experience.

Left alone, Otto’s descriptions of the presence of holiness may have sufficiently influenced Lewis’s theological views, since Lewis was, as Adam Barkman has argued, already inclined toward philosophical descriptions of spiritual longing.¹⁸ Yet Otto’s book also contained implications for pedagogy that appear to have directly influenced Lewis’s educational philosophy, particularly as expressed in *The Abolition of Man*. Otto argues that although holiness is ineffable per se, the non-rational component of holiness, the numinous, is in fact transmittable, or “awakened,” in non-rational ways. One does not require a burning bush to have a glimpse of the numinous:

It may serve to make the essential nature of the numinous consciousness clearer if we call to mind the manner in which it expresses itself outwardly, and how it spreads and is transmitted from

¹⁶ Ibid., 10.

¹⁷ C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: Harper Collins, 2001), 5–6.

¹⁸ Werther and Werther, *C. S. Lewis’s List*, 113–34.

mind to mind. There is, of course, no ‘transmission’ of it in the proper sense of the word; it cannot be ‘taught,’ it must be ‘awakened’ from the spirit. And this could not justly be asserted, as it often is, of a religion as a whole and in general, for in religion there is very much that can be taught—that is, handed down in concepts and passed on in school instruction. What is incapable of being so handed down is this numinous basis and background to religion, which can only be induced, incited, and aroused.¹⁹

Otto proceeds to say that we “awaken” others to the numinous most effectively through the field of aesthetics.²⁰ Visual arts, architecture, music, literature—these crafts have a potential for inciting a feeling-response that is analogous to the numinous quality of holiness. To appropriate a line from Yeats, it is in the arts that a terrible beauty is born.

Enchantment/Disenchantment

While it is clear that Lewis received the concept of the numinous from Otto, we might now go further in tracing Otto’s influence. One of Otto’s favored examples of the numinous comes from ancient Chinese painting. He says, “The art of China, Japan, and Tibet, whose specific character has been determined by Taoism and Buddhism, surpasses all others in the unusual richness and depth of such impressions of the ‘magical,’ and even an inexpert observer responds to them readily.”²¹ He goes on to reference a German art critic’s treatment of Chinese paintings from the Tang and Sung dynasties that speaks of the “breath of the primeval Tao” and “the knowledge of the ‘nothingness’ and the ‘void’, of the ‘Tao’ of heaven and earth, which is also the Tao of the human heart.”²² His discussion of the Tao may, in fact, be the most explicit bridge to Lewis’s *Abolition of Man*, as one of the more unexpected features of Lewis’s treatise on education has perhaps been his use of the word Tao to describe the “way” that true education ought to lead. (Lewis relies on both the meaning of Tao as “way,” and education as a “leading out.”) I am proposing that Lewis finds in Otto’s use of the word *Tao* a felicitous expression for his “doctrine of objective value.” For one, the word allows his argument a suggestion of universalism, that there are attempts to transmit the numinous in all world cultures. Furthermore, the word remains a religious word, yet it might be understood as minimally religious, associated in Otto’s context also with an aesthetic effect. In Lewis’s usage, it speaks for a basic, foundational, and premodern disposition found in all traditional cultures, that there is an objective moral reality that transcends the individual and individual societies.

Lewis contends that education must first arouse or incite a feeling-response akin to Otto’s *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*. It ought not be *primarily* concerned with critical thinking, thus prioritizing rational understanding. Lewis’s notion of the Tao is instead a redirection of education toward a sense of reverence, a sense that Lewis has only “awakened,” yet one that is foundational to rational thought. *The Abolition of Man* most directly outlines Lewis’s thought in this regard, though one might find also it throughout his works of fiction. As Judith Wolfe avers,

¹⁹ Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, 60.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 65.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 66.

²² *Ibid.*

“Lewis’s stories are didactic in the sense in which he uses the term in *The Abolition of Man*: that is, they offer visions of the good which elicit imaginative or emotional responses preceding or complimenting rational deliberation.”²³ Lewis worries that modern educational methods have turned away from the awakening of the proper imaginative and emotional responses appropriate to the objective givenness of the world; they instead privilege a series of subjective responses, whether they be affective or rational. In an example reminiscent of Otto’s own examples, Lewis contends that a good education would teach that a waterfall is sublime and that a fitting feeling-response to a waterfall is fear and awe, whereas modern educational methods will instead focus on idiosyncratic response.

By making processes like critical thinking foundational, modern educational methods encourage a subjective understanding of feeling-responses, thereby undermining feeling-response as a potential epistemological means. To be humbled by a waterfall becomes only one of many possible and equally valid responses. There is no longer any question of whether the response is fitting or appropriate. The practical result of a subjective understanding of feeling-responses is, for Lewis, to delegitimize feeling-response. By focusing on the individual’s feeling-response as a subjective value rather than focusing on its fittingness, modern educational practice encourages a suspicion of emotional responses altogether. As Lewis puts it, the student will “learn quickly enough, and perhaps indelibly...the belief that all emotions aroused by local association are in themselves contrary to reason and contemptible.”²⁴ Consequently, the faculty of “critical thinking” takes over as the matured student response, eliminating the initial emphasis on feeling-response. Thus, in Lewis’s view, an educational practice that might begin with a kind of Romantic privileging of personal self-expression is in fact motivated by positivist and utilitarian educational theories which, he believes, ultimately undermine the dignity of the human.

Although Lewis’s waterfall example initiates his argument by attacking modern educational methods that emphasize subjective responses and emotional self-expression, the targets of his argument are the modern educational theorists who have determined “critical thinking” to be the primary goal of education. Lewis makes clear that he is not seeking to rid education of emotion and desire; rather, he hopes to preserve these. In an oft-quoted line, he says that he wishes modern education “not to cut down jungles but to irrigate deserts.”²⁵ Lewis’s reliance on Otto’s notion of appropriate feeling-responses helps to confirm this point. According to Otto, there is a need to awaken a “disposition for knowing the holy,” since this disposition is an *a priori*, but not an *innate*, kind of cognition.²⁶ Similarly for Lewis, a student must be cultivated emotionally and imaginatively in a similar disposition—what I have been calling

²³ Judith Wolfe, “On Power,” in *The Cambridge Companion to C. S. Lewis*, ed. Robert MacSwain and Michael Ward (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 183.

²⁴ Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*, 8–9.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 13–14.

²⁶ Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, 176.

“reverence”—in order to “conform...to reality.”²⁷ Yet the role that feeling-response might have in education is undermined when modern education presumes that all feeling-responses are subjectively determined. By focusing on the value of an emotion per se, rather than the fittingness of the emotion, education detaches feeling-responses from having meaning. Because they are arbitrary, subjective feeling-responses become merely something to observe, to analyze, and to historicize. They become data for academics. The danger of modern educational theories that encourage the view that feeling-responses are all subjectively determined is not a loss of rationalism, but rather a cold and pervasive scientism, where scientism and its methods become the predominate way of viewing the world.²⁸

Modern education theories that assume this motivation thus brand themselves with terms that appeal to a utilitarian philosophy. They emphasize “skills” and “techniques,” prioritize “analysis” and “critical thinking.” Such language is ubiquitous today, yet it closely follows the language of the kind of educational theorists Lewis had in mind in *The Abolition of Man*, whom he calls the Innovators. The most prominent of such progressive education theorists, Dewey, sought explicitly to divorce education from a traditional focus on the formation of virtue. Dewey says in his “Pedagogic Creed” (1897) that “traditional education fails because it neglects this fundamental principle of the school as a form of community life. It conceives the school as a place where certain information is to be given, where lessons are to be learned, or where certain habits are to be formed.”²⁹ *The Abolition of Man*, on the contrary, champions what Dewey dismisses. For Lewis, traditional education confronts the “cardinal problem” of how “to conform the soul to reality, and the solution had been knowledge, self-discipline, and virtue.”³⁰

Crucial to Lewis’s educational philosophy, then, is the issue of “fittingness.” What is needed is a training of the emotions and habits fitting to a predetermined morality, and this would involve the minimally religious assumption that there is an objective reality to which our emotions can properly conform or not conform. This is Lewis’s “doctrine of objective value,” his Tao. He contends that education must have this teleological orientation. Otherwise Lewis predicted that by flattening feeling-responses into mere subjective responses, mere historical data, education would condition students to be purposeless—or rather, to view themselves as purposeless. In this case, the Innovators are the ones determining human purpose; education becomes propaganda. Lewis goes so far as to claim that, from his vantage point in the 1940s, modern education was furthermore promoting “a world of post-humanity, which some knowingly and some unknowingly...are at present laboring to produce.”³¹ The dual threat for Lewis, then, is that education once detached from a consideration of fittingness in favor of

²⁷ Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*, 77.

²⁸ A crucial difference between Dewey and Lewis is that where Dewey believes “scientific thinking” must be applied to the rethinking of all tradition, Lewis believes that this universal application of “scientific thinking” is a misapplication. See Dewey, *How We Think*, 145–56.

²⁹ John Dewey, “My Pedagogic Creed,” in *John Dewey on Education: Selected Writings*, ed. Reginald Archambault (New York: Modern Library, 1964), 431.

³⁰ Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*, 77.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 75.

expediency can (1) become a tool for propagandists and (2) dehumanize students by detaching them from purpose. The practical, immediate threat of education that considers, with Dewey, “community” instead of “virtue” is a student population that is easily manipulated, since communities detached from a higher good easily fall prey to the wealthy and powerful. The existential threat, however, is a loss of authentic humanity. Such education might start with a celebration of “self-expression” and mature into a demand for “critical thinking”—both aims are two sides of the same coin—but without a larger narrative of purpose, there is no room for discussion of what it means to be a flourishing human being.³²

Re-Enchantment

If Lewis is correct, that an imprudent focus on what today is regularly called “critical thinking” skills does in fact lead to a diminution of human dignity, then we might wish to consider some practical ways to alter course. We might first consider Lewis’s own concern, which lay primarily with the modern effects on the teaching of English; he subtitles *The Abolition of Man* as such: “with Special Reference to the Teaching of English in the Upper Forms of Schools.” Rather than encouraging “knowledge, self-discipline, and virtue,” English education increasingly teaches the process of “debunking” traditional sentiments, one of the practices that can be labeled as “critical thinking.” In contrast, Lewis recommended the role of narrative as a way to habituate emotions so that they were fitting to their object. Of course, the stories themselves must be privileged as immersive experiences, recommended for their own sake rather than only as an object of analysis. Otherwise narrative itself falls prey to the analytical habit of mind.

When defending the reading of literature in this manner, Lewis points out that literature ought not be seen as an escape from the world, if “escape” suggests that the world is something to be avoided. Rather, Lewis says, the reader “does not despise real woods because he read of enchanted woods, the reading makes all real woods a little enchanted.”³³ Such claims may be dismissed as a psychological trick that invests arbitrary meaning in things. However, one must remember that Lewis is suggesting, following Otto, that the *a priori* givenness of things in fact demands an initial attitude of reverence rather than one of mastery. Since narratives in general already contain an internal code of conduct, they are able to promote—or to use Otto’s word, “awaken”—a habit of receptivity within the reader. Furthermore, it is literature that is historically *other* which is best suited for a literary education. Lewis argues that we ought regularly to turn to stories from another era because they are able present to us our own cultural blind spots. (He even jokes that stories from the future would be similarly adept to this purpose, but “we can’t get at them.”)³⁴ Lewis is thus suggesting that through narrative we can become attuned to humanity’s teleological orientation—have a better understanding of, in Wendell Berry’s words, “what are

³² Lewis thus accords with MacIntyre’s critique of Enlightenment, cf. Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 3rd edition (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007).

³³ C. S. Lewis, *On Stories: And Other Essays on Literature* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2017), 17.

³⁴ C. S. Lewis, *God in the Dock* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2014), 217–25.

people for?” Narrative’s ability to engage a feeling-response of receptivity, not simply analytical capacity, avoids the modern tendency toward a quasi-scientific feeling of mastery.

We might identify other educational emphases and methodologies that seem to promote a similar feeling-response in their efforts. I will conclude by offering three, although the necessary elaborations cannot be fit in the confines of this essay. I submit the following as a way to promote future discussion: (1) The educational emphasis on ecological consciousness from a multi-discipline perspective would seem to promote the kind of feeling-response Lewis encourages, combining a reverence for a reality greater than the individual with an affirmation of humanity’s special dignity. There is a danger in the immediate politicization of ecology, with a counter-productive effect of instigating immediate suspicion of the subject matter. One may also perceive an incompatibility with contemporary ecological theory that gestures towards the “post-humanity” Lewis so urgently seeks to avoid. Nevertheless, Lewis himself proposes the possibility of a “regenerate science which... would not do even to minerals and vegetables what modern science threatens to do to man himself.”³⁵

(2) Like ecological consciousness, attention to manual craftsmanship offers another possible pedagogical means to cultivate Lewis’s desired feeling-response. For example, Matthew Crawford has advocated for increasing the role of manual labor as a kind of “liberal” education.³⁶ To fully participate in a skilled practice, one must submit to the pre-existing conditions of the material world and the experience of previous generations. Of course, Dewey’s educational theory regularly emphasizes learning by doing, as opposed to traditional models of instruction such as lecture. However, Dewey’s motivation is quite distinct from Crawford’s, and when Crawford speaks approvingly about university instruction, he appeals to more traditional liberal arts models.³⁷ Where Dewey prioritizes individualism as a means to “reflective thought” or “critical thinking,” Crawford privileges crafts whose products are defined by the history of craftsmanship as a means to become an individual. Crawford’s typical examples include motorcycle mechanics and pipe organ making.³⁸ To be a craftsman in such contexts is to conform to the craft’s prior history. Crawford’s enthusiasm for motorcycle mechanics is perhaps analogous to the minimally religious feeling-response promoted by Lewis and Otto. At least, the model of cultural apprenticeship Crawford delineates requires an initial receptivity on the way to artistry.

³⁵ Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*, 79.

³⁶ Matthew B. Crawford, *Shop Class as Soulcraft: An Inquiry into the Value of Work* (New York: Penguin Books, 2010), 180–97.

³⁷ Crawford expresses suspicion of MOOCs and the “current transformation of the American university along the lines of a business enterprise.” He seeks a return to an apprenticeship model of the liberal arts: “I am not much inclined to defend undergraduate education in its current form, and have expressed a fairly jaundiced view of its role in society elsewhere. But one of the things you learn in studying the history of politics is that power is consolidated by eliminating intermediate structures of authority, often under the banner of liberation from those authorities.” (Matthew B. Crawford, *The World Beyond Your Head: On Becoming an Individual in an Age of Distraction* [New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2016], 135–40).

³⁸ Crawford, *The World Beyond Your Head*.

(3) Finally, a return to the idea of a literary canon might be reenergized when understood as an analogue to a culture of craftsmanship. Canon-making happens regularly in practice, yet it is eschewed in theory. While Matthew Arnold's notion of "the best that has been thought and said" is notoriously slippery, and political and social forces have severely limited the canon at various times and places, the goal of a literary canon is to provide texts deemed worthy of teaching by a multi-generational consensus. The upshot of a theoretically grounded literary canon would be to cultivate a feeling-response more like reverence, rather than mere subjective taste. Canons resist the tyrannies of presentism, trendiness, celebrity—the subjective tastes of the freshmen student or the narcissistic instructor. But since they do emerge out of a consensus over time, literary canons are not closed; they are regularly seeking new interlocutors. Lewis's appendix to *The Abolition of Man* demonstrates, for instance, an attempt to consolidate a global premodern canon rooted in "illustrations of Natural Law." His inclusivity follows the recognition of a shared human nature that may differ in particular customs but unified on the essential point that there is such a thing as ethical obligation. Now, it should be noted that while Lewis makes "Natural Law" synonymous with his Tao here, he also wishes to maintain some distinction from the "full Stoical or medieval rigour [of] the doctrine of Natural Law."³⁹ As suggested earlier, Lewis's choice of the word "Tao," rather than the more readily available phrase "Natural Law," seeks to convey in part a universal recognition of an objective ground for morality. Though he does not intend to make an argument for theism, he nevertheless asks that the awakening of a minimally religious disposition of reverence remain the first priority of education.

³⁹ C. S. Lewis, "On Ethics," in *Christian Reflections*, ed. Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 55.