Introduction

Modernity and subjectivity appear to be fatefully intertwined. However one defines or describes modernity — and the competing accounts are many — the question of the subject almost always looms large. Already in Baudelaire’s ‘The Painter of Modern Life’ (1863), so often taken as an influential and generally celebratory account, the figure of the dandy signals the writer’s disgust with bourgeois democracy; self-creation through personal style represents a ‘cult of the ego’, and the dandy’s exteriorization of beauty functions as ‘the symbol of the aristocratic superiority of his mind.’ For Baudelaire, dandyism ‘is the last flicker of heroism in decadent ages’.1 Nietzsche, in a variety of works, but especially in Beyond Good and Evil (1886), mounts an assault on what he too sees as the decadence of western civilisation, arguing that Judeo-Christian theology and morality has turned ‘everything autocratic, manly, conquering, tyrannical, all the instincts proper to the highest and most successful of the type “man”, into uncertainty, remorse of conscience, self-destruction’ and claiming that democracy, which inherits Christian ethics, hastens this process of degeneration by making the individual a mediocre herd animal.2 For Nietzsche, we must ‘sail straight over morality and past it’ in order to create a new understanding of the human creature: ‘psychology is now once again the road to the fundamental problems’ (54). Simmel begins his key essay ‘The Metropolis and Mental Life’ (1903) with the claim that the ‘deepest problems of modern life’ centre on the individual’s struggle to maintain autonomy and independence against the encroachments of contemporary society.3 Describing the individual on the one hand as bombarded by constantly shifting stimuli that intensify emotional life and on the other hand as menaced by ‘the social-technological mechanism’ (324), Simmel suggests that the alienated self responds by becoming atomised and emptied of affect.4 Weber, in turn, characterising capitalism as ‘the most fateful force in our modern life’, famously concludes that its relentless rationalisation of social and economic processes drives human beings into the ‘iron cage’ of a bureaucratised and administered existence.5 And the work of a host of later writers, such as Lukacs, Heidegger, Adorno, Horkheimer, Habermas, and Foucault attests the continuing centrality of the self to debates about modernity.

Literary modernism is often said to pivot around the twin crises of representation and subjectivity, the one implicating the other, and it is a commonplace that modernist writing tends to embrace either subjectivism, in the form of an ‘inward turn’ or objectivism, in the shape of some version of ‘impersonality’. Such a distinction is valid only in a very limited sense, as it conceals important differences between writers ostensibly belonging in the same camp, but it does alert us to a basic conflict within modernism between opposing conceptions of self and world. Vague though they are, terms such as realist or materialist on one side and idealist or relativist on the other disclose the fault-lines along which this fissure runs. There is a gulf between, say, Woolf’s anti-naturalist view that ‘life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end’ and Eliot’s claim that poetry ‘is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality’ and his suggestion that through this depersonalization ‘art may be said to approach the condition of science.’ A key
issue in the different trajectories taken by various modernists concerns the nature of the cognising self, and to a large degree this issue turns on the status of human reason. Writers inclined to subjectivism emphasise intuition and epistemological uncertainty, displaying scepticism about the intellect's capacity reliably to know reality or to understand the mysteries of the self, whereas those who uphold objectivism argue that in the absence of reason the self collapses into solipsism and the external world disappears.

Matei Calinescu suggests that modernity ruptures along this fault-line into two mutually opposed tendencies, one espousing rationalism, the other courting irrationalism. Reason becomes the terrain of utmost strategic importance in modernist polemics, and fierce skirmishes are fought over the right to it. For if the world is to be understood on the model of human consciousness or to be seen as a fount of energy and plural forms, ceaselessly making and remaking itself, then it can be argued that reason grasps only a small part of reality and that it distorts what it grasps. Furthermore, it can be urged that only by abandoning rationality altogether and by plunging into the realm of becoming can one experience (rather than comprehend) the true nature of reality. Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) is the *locus classicus* for this view, and although he later repudiated this text, he maintained in *Ecce Homo* (1888, published 1908) that its two 'decisive innovations' were its understanding of Dionysianism and its view of Socrates 'as an instrument of Greek disintegration, a typical decadent'; he concludes that rationality is 'against instinct' and is 'a dangerous force that undermines life.' Louis A. Sass notes that such ideas lie behind some modernist writers' view of madness as liberating and the madman as one who rejects a stifling rationality in favour of a more authentic contact with the world. As Sass observes, however, this intensely subjective experience may not only dissolve the world in the psyche but also shatter the self, which, coming to seem derealized and alienated, confronts 'a subjectivised universe that is nevertheless devoid of any sense of subjectivity by which it might be anchored or constituted.'

Much of Wyndham Lewis's work in the late 1920s and early 1930s intervenes in and promotes debates about these issues. In key critical texts such as *The Art of Being Ruled* (1926), *The Enemy: A Review of Art and Literature* (1927–29), *Time and Western Man* (1927), *Paleface* (1929), and *Men Without Art* (1934) he put forward a critique of modernity and the view of the self that emerges from it. *Time and Western Man* was particularly important to Lewis; he described the 'group of books, critical and creative' that ensued as 'the offspring as it were of this key philosophical volume.' Running like a connecting thread through these texts is an account of the self that Lewis defined against the social tendencies and philosophical currents he excoriated. Put simply, he contended that crucial - and increasingly prevalent - aspects of modern life were working toward the destruction of the individual; because he viewed modernity as hastening the self's dissolution, he linked his account of it to the crisis of subjectivity over which it presided. For Lewis, modernity represented the inescapable field in relation to which the question of subjectivity had to be explored.

I want in this paper to reconstruct Lewis's conception of the self as disclosed by the major critical works he wrote in the late twenties and early thirties. I'm going to argue that Lewis's view of what makes individuals cohere as selves capable of acting as purposeful agents is structural and trans-historical. It is structural because it focuses on the psyche's tectonic features and tries to work out how they must be organised for volitional subjectivity to exist; it is trans-historical because it sees humans as creatures of a determinate kind, suggesting that how one becomes a well-knit, effective 'self' does not differ in essentials over time. Lewis was, I think, indebted to Plato in important respects, and although I don't propose to push this link too far, not
wishing to obscure their differences, I want to stress the continuity of thought between them in order to bring out the extent to which Lewis thought of the self in terms that were explicitly hostile to the modern conceptions associated with figures such as Nietzsche and Freud. Like Plato, he argued that reason was to be sovereign over the drives and affects, and he emphasised human function by maintaining that individuals are endowed with aptitudes that they should consciously develop through the exercise of a craft or occupation. Lewis left the question of particular predispositions (and the vocations that follow them) open; he neither specified the life of rational contemplation as the end of ends nor identified reason with the form of the Good. But his account of psychic health, which he opposed to a whole range of intellectual and social tendencies that in his view undermined it was predicated on the conviction that only when the self obeys the dictates of reason can it be unified, and only when it is so unified can it function meaningfully and effectively.

In Defence of the Rational Subject

Lewis wrote in Paleface that because ‘we have lost our sense of reality’ we ‘return to the central problem of our “subjectivity,” which is what we have in the place of our lost sense, and which is the name by which our condition goes.’ This statement contains the germ of the theory he elaborated in his writing of the period, namely that social and political life was being so completely transformed that individuals were losing their psychological bearings. Lewis contended that the far-reaching changes wrought by the combined impact of science, industry, and democracy were destabilising enough but that after the Great War, events had taken a more insidious turn, for the destruction of a once stable realm of public values coincided with the proliferation and gradual dominance of various forms of mass communication, with the result that experience of reality was largely mediated. At the same time, scientific advances were creating a global norm – a world-hegemony, externally uniform, and producing more every day a common culture (TWM 80). In this time of transition, in which a post-liberal age was struggling to emerge, people were caught between the blandishments of the mass media and the standardisation imposed by technological hegemony. So it was that Lewis inveighed against post-war society’s ‘progressive preciision of all that is individual, its rage to extinguish the independent life of persons’, arguing that the age ‘exact an uncritical hypnotic sleep of all within it.’

But Lewis discerned a paradox in this situation. The more completely people were controlled by a technologised economy and tranquilised by a media machine, the more they sought to assert their individuality. What he claimed of nations was equally true of individuals: ‘The more fundamentally alike nations become, the more fiercely “nationalist” is their temper; but also the more impersonal they grow (in the nature of things, in a more intensely organized routine of life), the more they talk of freedom, and of their “personality” ’ (P 75). It was as a result of the industrial transformation of society that people, like nations, sought to differentiate themselves from others by proclaiming their uniqueness, and it is these social conditions that explained the prevalence of ‘ “subjective” fashions’ (P 100). But for Lewis this was an ersatz individualism which was unable to shape civic life and was in important respects regulated by what Adorno and Horkheimer called the ‘culture industry’.

The transition from a public to a private way of thinking and feeling was a travesty of the kind of individualism Lewis upheld; it signalled capitulation to the ‘great industrial machine’ which had ‘removed from the individual life all responsibility’ and which Lewis compared to ‘the Greek political decadence’ that substituted an atomised individualism for the original ideal of life in the polis (P 100).
Lewis’s writings of the late twenties and early thirties systematically favoured the individual over the collectivity. But he didn’t uphold individualism as a positive value in and of itself; for Lewis, it all depends on what kind of individual we are talking about. For a start, the personhood he defended was conceived in structural terms; it was to be marked by inner cohesiveness and integrity. The question of the self’s dependence or independence is an ‘organic’ one, ‘a matter of concentrations and dispersions’ (P 79). Internal order was central to Lewis’s understanding of what constitutes coherent subjectivity, for he argued that he associated the ‘idea “person” . . . essentially with the idea of “organization” ’ (P 78). This view was at odds with celebrations of subjective expressionism, as the following expostulation from Men Without Art makes clear: ‘I am not using a “personality” in the Bully hue sense – I do not mean an individualist abortion, bellowing that it wants at all costs to “express” itself . . . I mean only a constancy and consistency in being, as concretely as possible, one thing – at peace with itself, if not with the outer world, though that is likely to follow after an interval of struggle.’ This stress on internal unity was closely bound up with an emphasis on stability. In Time and Western Man Lewis insisted that ‘our only terra firma in a boiling and shifting world is, after all, our “self” ’, maintaining that this self ‘must cohere for us to be capable at all of behaving in any way but as mirror-images of alien realities, or as the most helpless and lowest organisms, as worms or sponges’ (TW 132).

Surely, he asks in a later passage, ‘the essence of a personality, or of an “individual consciousness,” is that it should be stable’ (TW 181). Constancy, consistency, organisation, order, and stability – these are Lewis’s fundamental structural criteria for purposive agency.

How puzzling, then, to read in Hal Foster’s recent account of Lewis that he tried to ‘imagine a new ego’ that could not just ‘withstand the shocks of the military-industrial, the modern-urban, and the mass-political’ but could ‘convert them into a hardened subject able to thrive on such shocks.’ Foster sees this hardening of the subject as a response to anxieties about the non-differentiation promoted by mass society, which is in Lewis’s case initially mobilised around gender – the writer upholding a masculine modernism against a feminised modernity – but is finally deployed in the service of anti-humanism. He suggests that Lewis ‘assumes a separation not only from the divine and the natural but from the human’, that he valorises this separation, and that in his work ‘self-alienation is trooped not only as the preservation of the self but also as its supreme value’ (21). Alan Munton has usefully taken Foster to task for his misconceptions about Lewis, pointing out that Foster’s theoretical framework (which is broadly Lacanian) leads him to misread a good deal of his work. I agree with the basic tenets of Munton’s critique of Foster, but I want to take the debate in a slightly different direction. Foster is, I think, demonstrably wrong about Lewis, as the above citations from the latter amply attest. Lewis clearly and unequivocally argued that the self needs in some way to be organised and integrated if it is to function in a properly human way; he defended an essentialist view of what might today be called ‘centred’ rather than ‘decentred’ subjectivity. Self-preservation lies at the heart of this conception, and its Other is an external reality (both social and ontological) that may be experienced as disordered or even hostile to the self. Foster may himself be hostile to this account, but it is bizarre in the extreme to argue that for Lewis self-alienation represented the individual’s means of self-preservation and ‘its supreme value’, since such a claim can never be squared with Lewis’s belief that the personality should be ‘at peace with itself’ and that this peace could only be achieved if the psyche was organised, constant, consistent, coherent, and stable (all his own words). Perhaps Foster tropes such a conception of identity as self-alienation because his reading of Lacan leads him to a view of the self in which notions of order and hierarchy can only be read as instances of repression.
Munton’s piece raises other questions. Referring to ‘The Code of a Herdsman’ (1917), he draws our attention to Lewis’s claim that the personality is divided and that self-division protects the individual from arrogance and stultified thinking. Munton argues that in Lewis’s conception of the personality ‘the differing selves are nevertheless related, and it is only when they fall out among themselves that the personality becomes damaged’ (7). On Munton’s view, Lewis conceives humans as dialogic entities, which achieve integration by communing with their multiple selves. I think this is right and I agree that Lewis outlines how to effect an integration that acknowledges plurality in Time and Western Man. But I want to explore Lewis’s account of this issue in more detail than Munton has space for, given his wider concern with recent Lewis criticism.

Published ten years later than ‘The Code of a Herdsman’ and after Lewis had had time to reflect on the impact of the Great War and to consider the direction post-war society was taking, Time and Western Man urged the pressing need for unity of the self more anxiously than the earlier ‘Code of a Herdsman’. Lewis’s philosophical naturalism is evident in this text. He couched his account of how the self needs to constellate around some central core in functionalist language. Although he saw the self as protean, he claimed that it requires a guiding principle to establish a coherent identity for it and to render it capable of effective action. Clearly influenced in his thinking by his own activity as an artist and writer, he argued that if an individual’s life ‘is centred upon some deep-seated instinct or some faculty, he will find a natural exclusiveness necessary to proper functioning’ (TWM 132). How is this centering to take place? Referring to his own inner conflicts, Lewis wrote: ‘I have allowed these contradictory things to struggle together, and the group that has proved the most powerful I have fixed upon as my most essential ME. This decision has not, naturally, suppressed or banished the contrary faction, almost equal in strength, indeed, and even sometimes in the ascendant. And I am by no means above spending some of my time with this domestic Adversary. All I have said to myself is that always, when it comes to the pinch, I will side and identify myself with the powerfulest Me, and in its interests I will work’ (TWM 133). Noting that in his own case the two sides of his personality are ‘well matched’, he goes on to describe a version of negative capability, suggesting that such ‘natural matching of opposites’ places the individual ‘at the centre of the balance’ (TWM 133).

Voluntarism and functionalism are both at work in this conflictual model of human interiority, for the creation of the integrated self on the one hand depends on the idea of an innate aptitude that defines the self in some fundamental way but on the other hand rests on an act of will. There is a tension here between a kind of determinism and a desire to see the self as freely created, as the following passage suggests: ‘So my philosophic position could almost be called an occupational one, except that my occupation is not one that I have received by accident or mechanically inherited, but is one that I chose as responding to an exceptional instinct or bias. So as the occupation is an art, and hence implies a definite set of faculties and predispositions (which, out of all the other things that it was free to me to occupy myself with, made me adopt that art as my occupation), it could perhaps more exactly be described as the expression of the instincts of a particular kind of man, rather than as an artist among men of other occupations’ (TWM 133). Lewis readily admitted that this was a partisan account, but the twists and turns of his argument disclosed even his difficulties in making it, for it is marked by the antagonism between liberty and compulsion. To take a direction in life for which one has an instinctive predisposition is to be at least partially constrained by factors beyond one’s control, and the close proximity to each other of the phrases ‘free to me’ and ‘made me’ only draws attention to the unresolved question of how far the individual is responsible for the direction he takes in life.
This seems the obvious place to reflect on Lewis’s complex relationship with Nietzsche, since at first glance their respective accounts of the self appear to be strikingly similar. Lewis’s general response to Nietzsche’s thought has been discussed in detail by Paul Edwards and Toby Avard Foshay. It is beyond dispute that Lewis was deeply indebted to Nietzsche but also that he departed from him in important respects. I want here to look primarily at the ways in which Lewis’s view of the self differs from Nietzsche’s, and in particular to argue that despite his initial fascination with Nietzsche Lewis’s later hostility to him runs deep. Both see the self as plural but Lewis rejects Nietzsche’s assertion that the drives necessarily embody a will to power; dismisses his reduction of the self to the sum of its actions; and, despite his own characteristic mistrust of moralism, treats Nietzsche’s refusal of ethics _tut court_ and his desire to inaugurate a world beyond good and evil as a fantasy, suggesting that civilisation cannot survive without the concept of accountability. Above all, whereas Nietzsche valorises the instincts in his attempt at self-overcoming and believes human beings can attain some new, higher level of existence, Lewis argues that humans are determinate creatures of a particular kind and maintains that reason is indispensable to the unification of the subject that is necessary if it is to function as a consistent entity.

Nietzsche’s notoriously elusive writings are deliberately anti-systematic, but his view of the self appears to be fairly consistent. He conceives the psyche as comprising a variety of competing impulses, all striving to assert supremacy since ‘every drive is tyrannical’ (_BGE_ 37). The only hope is to try to master these impulses through a process of self-overcoming that rejects all previous notions of the human being as a spiritual and moral creature. At times, Nietzsche wonders whether the whole of reality may not be reducible to the drives he everywhere sees operant: ‘Granted that nothing is “given” as real except our world of desires and passions, that we can rise or sink to no other “reality” than the reality of our drives – for thinking is only the relationship of these drives to one another –: is it not permitted to make the experiment and ask the question whether this which is given does not _suffice_ for an understanding even of the so-called mechanical (or “material”) world?’ (_BGE_ 66). Nietzsche sees all drives as seeking to dominate because they are all partial embodiments of an over-arching drive of drives – the will to power itself. The instinct for self-preservation is mistakenly regarded as ‘the cardinal drive in an organic being’ because a ‘living thing desires above all to _vent_ its strength – life as such is will to power’ (_BGE_ 44); we should see ‘our entire instinctual life as the development and ramification of one basic form of will – as will to power’ (_BGE_ 67). Christopher Janaway sums up this aspect of Nietzsche’s thought by writing that for him the subject ‘is a process consisting of a multiplicity of impulses or drives occurring within a single organism’ and that the drives ‘always subserve some manifestations of will to power.’

Nietzsche argues in _The Genealogy of Morals_ that the emergence of Christianity, with its peculiar account of the ‘soul’, marks the epochal transition from an unconscious existence to the ‘illness’ of a conscious, spiritual, and ethical life that distrusts and turns against the instincts (_GM_ 84). This transition was disastrous. If the will to power is the will to life then for Nietzsche it can only be healthy when expressed through the unimpeded flowering of instinct. Natural morality is ‘healthy morality’ when it is ‘dominated by an instinct of life’; every human error ‘is a consequence of degeneration of instinct’, whereas ‘everything good is instinct.’ Any idea of free will based on rational thought is a delusion, since the subject is a channel through which ‘life’ (will to power) forces its way and his health depends on the ease or difficulty with which this passage is effected. Notions of blameworthiness or responsibility must therefore be jettisoned: ‘What alone can our teaching be? – That no one _gives_ a human being his qualities: not God, not
society, not his parents or ancestors, not *he himself*. . . . *No-one* is accountable for existing at all, or for being constituted as he is, or for living in the circumstances and surroundings in which he lives* (TI 64). The concept of free will – an infamous theological attempt to make human beings responsible for their actions – ‘deprived becoming of its innocence’ and was ‘invented essentially for the purpose of punishment, that is of finding guilty’ (TI 63). For Nietzsche, the concept of accountability is inseparable from belief in God; hence his assertion that ‘in denying God, we deny accountability: only by doing *that* do we redeem the world’ (TI 64).  

Nietzsche and Lewis both operate with a conflictual model of the self; emphasise the decisive importance of drives, affects, and instincts; and acknowledge that identity remains plural and protean. But the differences between them are significant. To begin with, there is no idolatry of the will to power in Lewis and it is certainly not equated with ‘life’. Lewis argued that a coherent sense of identity emerges from the internal struggle between various aspects of the self only when the most powerful wins out, but in this context power refers to the kind of aptitude that inclines the individual to a particular vocation. Lewis used words such as ‘instinct’, ‘faculty’, ‘bias’, and ‘predisposition’ almost interchangeably, and he stressed that he himself chose to develop those aptitudes that were strongest in him and for which he felt a clear predilection. But he neither valorised them for their power *qua* power nor identified them with an overarching will to power. He implied, rather, that they were of value only insofar as they signalled to a particular individual (himself) where his talents might lie and offered him the choice of choosing to develop them or not. Nietzsche, furthermore, not only equated the will to power with life itself and viewed its affirmation as the sign of a robust, non-degenerate existence but also saw it as the means by which self-overcoming and the inauguration of the *Ubermensch* could be achieved. 28 The ‘higher man’ whose coming Nietzsche heralded represented the transformation of the human creature into a ‘higher form of being’ and a ‘lord and master’. 29 Lewis, in contrast, considered that human beings are endowed with a nature that sets limits to the paths their development may take. His anti-prometheanism explains his resistance to Nietzsche’s power doctrines: ‘My position is that we are creatures of a certain kind, with no indication that a radical change is imminent; and that the most pretentious of our present prophets is unable to do more than promise “an eternity of intoxication” to those who follow him into less physical, more “cosmic,” regions’ (TWM 110). In *Men Without Art* he distanced himself from the ‘romanticism’ – as interpreted by Hulme – that sees man as ‘an infinite reservoir of possibilities’, arguing that man is finite and limited, needing tradition and order to flourish. 30 Lewis saw Nietzsche’s power doctrines as an extension of Darwin’s evolutionary theory, and while this link is questionable, it helps to explain his resistance to any notion that human beings could evolve into ‘higher men’. 31 He noted in *Rude Assignment* that whereas he was early attracted to Nietzsche’s light, aphoristic works, he objected even then to the ‘titanic nourishment for the ego’ provided by Zarathustra and was ‘reasonably immune to the Superman’ (RA 128); writing in the 1950s, he wanted to ‘make it absolutely clear that there is not the least trait of Ubermenschlichkeit anywhere in my mind’ (RA 203). 32

Lewis’s resistance to Nietzsche’s emphasis on will to power and the *Ubermensch* was bound up with his view of how the self should be integrated. Nietzsche’s account of identity seems to dissolve the self into the sum of its actions. In an oft-quoted passage, he wrote that ‘there is no “being” behind doing, effecting, becoming; “the doer” is merely a fiction added to the deed – the deed is everything’ (GM 45). Alexander Nehamas claims that Nietzsche reduced ‘the agent self to the totality of its actions’. 33 It is through the enactment of deeds that subjectivity emerges and forms itself; there is no antecedent ‘self’ structuring the personality. Lewis tried to reverse this
order of priorities. The account he gave in *Time and Western Man* of how he ‘fixed’ on the most fundamental (powerful) aspects of his nature strongly suggested that human identity not only depends at least in part on conscious volition but also draws on a central core of being – the ‘I’ that he invoked as the arbiter of his inner conflicts. I’m not sure Lewis was entirely clear about how this conscious ‘I’ emerges, since it seems already to be in place to adjudicate between the opposed parts of his personality, but on the interpretation I’m urging he certainly distanced himself from any view of identity as the product of unintentional acts. Paul Edwards writes that in Lewis’s account of the struggle to forge the identity, it ‘is not simply a matter of an immediately recognized preference, but an active, intellectual, and critical process involving reason.’ If Nietzsche emphasised self-creation through action, then Lewis stressed the vital role played by the thinking part of the human being, seeking in this way to preserve intentionality and protect the viability of purposive agency.

Reason is of decisive importance in Lewis’s view of the self. It is on the basis of reason that he rejects Nietzsche’s celebration of the will to power, instincts, and the deed, arguing that when reason does not play a significant part in the constitution of the self, identity remains disordered, in thrall to haphazard impulses and affects, and prey to the world’s false gods. Bruce Detwiler has suggested that in Nietzsche’s account of internal struggle ‘it is not superior reason that is ultimately decisive but superior power’ and that ‘self-overcoming is after all wholly reducible to a matter of will to power’ (TWM 298). Lewis, in contrast, emphasises throughout his work ‘all the advantages for man in having a specifically intellectual centre of control, and principle of authority’ (TWM 298). It is here that Lewis is at his closest to Plato. Questions of control and authority lie at the heart of Plato’s conception of the self: he is explicit that reason is to be sovereign over both the appetites and the spirit because reason alone is capable of establishing order among the soul’s constituent elements. For Plato, internal order, structure, and harmony are the prerequisites of purposive functioning. Modelling his view of the soul on the political state, he argues in *The Republic* that unity is vital if civil war is to be averted, but that unity can only be achieved if reason is regent. This is not because reason is a despot desirous of power but because it alone has ‘the wisdom and foresight to act for the whole’ (36). It is of the first importance to Plato that reason acts in a non-repressive way; it establishes order and unity by way of effecting concord between the different parts of the soul, which, because they voluntarily agree that reason should indeed rule, are enabled henceforth not only to live in harmony but also to be guided by right thinking.

Lewis’s emphasis on the role played by reason in the self’s constitution, and his belief that the self must be integrated under the aegis of the intellect aligns him with Plato. He claims that ‘the most intelligent tendencies in modern life’ are ‘directed to the rationalization of our automatic impulses’ (TWM 19). He argues that the self must ‘cohere’ if individuals are ‘to be capable of behaving in any way but as mirror-images of alien realities, or as the most helpless and lowest organisms, as worms or sponges’ (TWM 132). He attacks the world of advertisement for its debilitating transformation of the psyche, which becomes discontinuous and empty: ‘The human being is no longer the unit. He becomes the containing frame for a generation or sequence of ephemerals, roughly organized into what he calls his “personality.” Or the highly organized human mind finds its natural organic unity degraded into a worm-like extension, composed of a segmented, equally-distributed, accentless life’ (TWM 12). His essay ‘On the Credentials of the Painter’ (1922) is of particular interest here. Making reference at one point to Hume’s essay ‘On the Standard of Taste’, Lewis takes Hume’s claim that reason must be used in the discernment of moral beauty as a springboard for his own reflections on the nature of identity:
Argument and reflection are certainly very necessary, much as people dislike them, where the finer, or better the finest, art, in any kind, is concerned. But, in the interests of this dialectic, no laws can be adduced of universal application. The work of art, in the end, has to impose itself on men like a living individual. Instead of appealing to their intelligence only, supplying them with a mechanical formula of universal efficacy, it must appeal to their whole make-up, or to their taste. The taste is a sort of higher, more complex intelligence. Every faculty serves it, and is found represented in its composition. Very few people possess this personal arbiter, or synthesis of the ego. The system of mutually contradictory compartments obtains usually: a man passes from one room to another. In one he performs actions that would be found repugnant to the self that he has left in the last, and vice versa. It is taste alone that can make him a dependable and ordered being.\textsuperscript{38}

On this argument, taste elevates intelligence to a higher mode; the other faculties subordinate themselves to that of taste, which effects a synthesis of the ego. This synthesis is necessary if the individual is to resolve the internal contradictions that make his conduct irregular and is to become a reliable and consistent self.\textsuperscript{39} This argument – excepting the discussion of taste – runs parallel to the critique Lewis made of William James in \textit{Time and Western Man}. There, he argued that James’s philosophy denies any unity or continuity of being to the individual self, dispersing it into a multiplicity of disconnected selves. For Lewis – and here we see another key difference from Nietzsche – it was ‘beyond any possible question’ that man ‘should regard himself as one person’ because it is ‘only in that way that you can hope to ground in him a responsibility towards all “his” acts’ (\textit{TWM} 341). Referring to ‘a comic heraclitean . . . who refused to pay the rent for a house he had taken, on the ground that he was no longer the same man who had rented it’, he argued that this view of the self as radically dissevered and disseminated is ‘an ideal comedian’s philosophy’ (\textit{TWM} 342).

\textbf{From Dionysus to the Elan Vital}

So far I have concentrated on Lewis’s conception of the self. In this section I want briefly to consider his critique of figures such as Schopenhauer, Bergson, and Freud. The lineaments of this critique are too well known to require detailed exposition, so I propose to focus primarily on the way it implicitly sharpens up Lewis’s opposing view of human identity and functioning.

A key work in this context is \textit{The Birth of Tragedy}, the terms of which structure Lewis’s thought in decisive ways. \textit{The Birth of Tragedy} is still articulated in terms of the metaphysics Nietzsche later spurned, but its distinction between Apollo and Dionysus is central to an understanding of the issues dividing Lewis from the philosophers he attacked. In Nietzsche’s account Apollo presides over the realm of sight, emphasises boundaries, structure, and moderation, and gives rise to artistic clarity, whereas Dionysus rules over the domain of sound, rhythm, and dance, signals passion, energy, and excess, and creates an art that induces frenzy and a mystic merging with nature. Apollo and Dionysus are opposed but interdependent; nevertheless, there is an implicit hierarchy between them, with the Dionysian functioning as Nietzsche’s touchstone of value.\textsuperscript{40} Dionysus was Nietzsche’s name for a variety of things (eg. instinct, a form of tragedy, the Anti-Christ, opposition to rationalism) but he always associated it with an energy that shatters decadent or stultified modes of being and thinking. However varied its deployment, the breaking of boundaries lies at its heart. In \textit{The Birth} it leads to a fusion of self/other and self/nature, which offers the possibility of access to a joyful, unbounded existence outside the confines of civilisation.\textsuperscript{41}
Nietzsche’s Apollonian/Dionysian dichotomy structures a good deal of Lewis’s thought except that he reversed Nietzsche’s values. Terms such as intoxication, frenzy, power, action, sensation, and instinct incurred his disapproval, whereas terms like sobriety, measure, harmony, lucidity, and intelligence received his imprimatur. In *Time and Western Man* and *The Art of Being Ruled* Lewis savaged Nietzsche’s Dionysianism and linked it to Bergson’s and James’s *elan vital*. Identifying an intellectual genealogy that runs from Schopenhauer and von Hartmann through Nietzsche and on to Bergson, James and then the behaviourists, he saw its main characteristics as a celebration of the Heracleanite flux; an emphasis on the subjective experience of reality; an extirpation of the ‘ego’ or transcendental subject; and a rejection of reason as a guide to thought and conduct in favour of the control of the Will (Schopenhauer) or the Unconscious (Freud). It was a tradition of thought, he maintained, that threatened to destroy any idea of the self as a rational, purposeful entity with a consistent and coherent identity.

Lewis’s basic thesis was that these thinkers had progressively undermined the concept of the conscious, deliberating, arbitrating ego and had thus presided over the ‘final extinction of “the Subject”’ (*TWM* 289). Freud, Bergson, and James are merely the last in a line of writers who have dismantled the notion of a stable ego, replacing it with conceptions of the self that see it purely in terms of discontinuous drives, impulses, and affects. Already in Schopenhauer, Lewis argued, the will escapes rational control: ‘His god (or Will, as he prefers to call it) is a vast, undirected, purposeless impulse: not, like us, conscious: but blind, powerful, restless and unconscious. It is indeed the opposite of our purpose (which is identified with consciousness): for it is purposeless (which is identified with unconsciousness)’ (*TWM* 311–312).

Schopenhauer’s will was for Lewis ‘bergsonian “instinct” and “intuition”’ and ‘the first great “Unconscious,” dated 1818’ (*TWM* 309). Lewis saw the will and the unconscious as counterparts because they bypassed reason and threatened the sovereignty of the conscious mind. Thus he regarded Nietzsche’s alleged overcoming of Schopenhauer’s notorious pessimism through the affirmation of action as nothing of the kind, since for him this affirmation was just a revolt of the emotions ‘against thought and intellect’, which resulted in a ‘plunge back again into ignorance – or the world of will and illusion’ (*TABR* 117). The unconscious, in turn, which for Lewis was a modern version of Plato’s ‘“mob of the senses”’ (*TWM* 321), represented an assault by the tumultuous, unruly emotions on the rational conscious. Rejecting Freud’s depiction of the conscious mind as part of a repressive apparatus that denies the affects and instincts their life by entombing them in the unconscious, he argued that to explain human behaviour in terms of the latter’s dark promptings was ultimately to destroy the ratiocinative self: ‘There are no *individuals* in the Unconscious; because a man is only an individual when he is conscious’ (*TWM* 301).

But of course for Lewis it all depended on how one conceived the conscious. He took Bergson’s and James’s vitalist philosophies to task because in his view their Heraclitean conception of reality as ceaseless change promoted a picture of the self as a profoundly unstable entity. Their claim that reality could only be fully understood if one merged with it, suspending one’s rational faculties and analytical concepts, led to an emphasis on intuition, sensation, and uncodified experience. James writes, for example, that true understanding requires us to ‘turn our backs on our winged concepts altogether, and bury ourselves in the thickness of those passing moments over the surface of which they fly, and on particular points of which they occasionally rest and perch.’ And Bergson explicitly contrasts ‘intuition’ with ‘analysis’, noting that by ‘intuition is meant the kind of intellectual sympathy by which one places oneself within an object in order to coincide with what is unique in it and consequently inexpressible.’ The suspicion of analytical thought, which derives from opposition to the Platonic belief in an ordered, uniform
reality, produces a view of human identity as itself permeated by the flux. Lewis argued that because James and Bergson privileged the stream of consciousness they endorsed a view of human life as little more than evanescent experience, with the result that the perceiving self is reduced to a series of temporally successive but otherwise unrelated states of mind. The individual is on the one hand unable to cohere as a consistent, stable self, and on the other hand severed from any notion of an external reality that sets constraints on cognition and self-creation. Vitalism destroys the self because it reduces it to the chronology of its experiences — the sensations of life — but fails (by definition, almost) to explain on what principle they might be interpreted, ordered, or prioritised. In contrast to what he saw as the dissolution of the self into discontinuous and purely contingent states of consciousness, Lewis argued that, for him, ‘“personality” ... is nothing but stability’ (TWM 343) and that ‘[c]ontinuity, in the individual as in the race, is the diagnostic of a civilized condition’ (TABR 204).

Reason figures prominently in Lewis’s work because he sees it as requisite to human functioning. This is because reason can synthesise the otherwise ruinously compartmentalised personality and because it enables the kind of conscious, critical thought that Lewis considers indispensable to social and cultural life. Acknowledging his allegiance to a western tradition in which reason has played a decisive role, he writes: ‘For us the world has presented itself to our senses sharp and hard of outline. It is stamped with the objectivity of the rational. This is a privilege’ (RA 195). And commenting on why he has bothered to expose Spengler’s ‘almost insane inconsistencies’ he explains that it is because when people swallow them they ‘are being taught not to reason, to cease to think’ (TWM 284). There is an important bond here between rational thought and a view of the self as needing to be ordered and unified. Charles Taylor has pointed out that for Plato rational self-mastery ensures ‘unity with oneself, calm, and collected self-possession’ and that this account of the psyche is inseparable from a dispassionate cognitive stance toward external reality. He argues that this model of the bounded, self-contained individual is opposed to all notions of the individual as infused with a cosmic life-force, for on this latter conception the world cannot be known rationally but can only be experienced mystically. Within the Platonic model, this negation of reason undermines the unity that makes calm reflection possible, because if the self is meant to be ‘a single locus’ then to see it as ‘comprising a plurality of loci is an experience of error and imperfection’ (S 120). It was no accident, Taylor notes, that ‘fragmentation and divine infusion of power belonged together, or that both were set aside in the Platonic formulation’ (S 120).

Lewis’s polemical assault on the re-emergence of a vitalist tradition in contemporary thought offers a footnote to Plato. Like Plato, he sets his face against Dionysian dynamism, the flux, and the discontinuous personality. He describes himself in Time and Western Man as a realist, maintaining that he sees the world as marked by stability rather than change. Philosophers like Nietzsche, Bergson and James, he argues, focus on the flux, and because they see reality in terms of the individual’s subjective experience, they encourage the slide into solipsism. For Lewis, the displacement of an objectively existing reality by a ‘chronological mentalism’ of this kind leads to the ultimate disintegration of both self and world, for in this way of thinking ‘you lose not only the clearness of outline, the static beauty, of the things you commonly apprehend; you lose also the clearness of outline of your own individuality which apprehends them’ (TWM 167). Whereas Bergson claims, in Frederick Burwick and Paul Douglass’s words, that ‘the universe is best understood on the model of the development and elaboration of consciousness’, Lewis insists on the existence of a palpably concrete and physically recalcitrant world: ‘If there is one thing more than another that is essential to provide a “sense of reality: — our sheer sensation that there is
something real there before us – it is the deadness, the stolid thickness and deadness of nature’ (TWM 200). These words not only evoke the world’s material otherness but also emphasise its stability. Lewis clarifies his viewpoint in Paleface: ‘To “despise the fluid” and “to postulate permanence” . . . to crystallize that which (otherwise) flows away, to concentrate the diffuse, to turn to ice that which is liquid and mercurial – that certainly describes my occupation, and the tendency of all that I think’ (P 254–55). Lewis’s view of the self as an entity in dynamic equipoise is indissociable from his belief that stability and permanence underpin the world’s apparent mutability. These twin theses are diametrically opposed to a conception of reality as an ever-changing flux which is best apprehended through a suspension of the intellect and an immersion in what James describes as ‘the thickness’ of its ‘passing moments’. For Lewis, this is the philosophy ‘of a blind organism’ which ‘invites to that “eternity of intoxication” of the gibe of Plato’ (TABR 349).

Puppets and Natures

Lewis holds to a clear-cut conception of what makes for effective human functioning, but he is deeply pessimistic about most people’s capacity to attain the standard he sets. Whereas the theory of democracy is predicated on notions of equality and freedom for all, Lewis claims that people are in no sense equal to each other and that the majority neither desire nor are capable of liberty. For him, the population can be divided into two clearly demarcated groups. Consider the following statement:

Goethe had a jargon of his own for referring to these two species whose existence he perfectly recognized. He divided people into Puppets and Natures. He said the majority of people were machines, playing a part. When he wished to express admiration for a man, he would say about him, “He is a nature.” This division into natural men and mechanical men (which Goethe’s idiom amounts to) answers to the solution advocated in this essay. And today there is an absurd war between the “puppets” and the “natures,” the machines and the men. And owing to the development of machinery, the pressure on the “natures” increases. We are all slipping back into machinery, because we all have tried to be free. And what is absurd about this situation is that so few people even desire to be free in reality.

Lewis updates Goethe’s distinction slightly, making it more directly pertinent to the technological age, but he retains its naturalising tenor. The ‘nature’ is an autonomous individual of independent mind and constitutional vigour, whereas the ‘puppet’ is a manufactured automaton who mimics genuine life but is always living at second hand. For Lewis, in this passage at least, these two groups are forever divided from each other – they belong to different ‘species’ – and any attempt, political or otherwise, to bring them together is doomed to fail because of this hard fact of nature. A quarrel about political theories and systems lies at the heart of this issue. The conflict between the two ‘species’ Lewis identifies is for him absurd because it is generated by a mistaken political impulse – deriving from abstract theories of rights – to accord all individuals the same treatment. He argues in Paleface that it is a ‘universal’ law that only ‘a person can be susceptible of a right’ and dismisses T. H. Green’s claim that all human beings owe each other a due as ‘a merely sentimental cliché’ (P 76). For Lewis, people can neither possess rights nor demand obligations by virtue of belonging to the species homo sapiens, because what is owing to another is “due” not because the object of it is “human,” nor because the skin in question is white or black; it is “due” because in some way we recognize an entity with superior claims to
ours upon our order, kind or system’ (P 76). *Paleface* is explicit on this point: obligations are unidirectional, not reciprocal. The ‘person’ who can command them is described in structural terms alone: ‘The idea “person” I associate essentially with the idea of “organization.” What we could say was “due” to what is highly organized on the part of what is less highly organized – that is the principal character of this obligation’ (P 78). And as we have already seen, not everyone can be a ‘person’ in this sense, since humanity divides into ‘puppets’ and ‘natures’, and ‘independence of character, or the being a person, is a gift of nature’ (P 79). Lewis maintains in *Paleface* that the democratic belief in equal rights is openly contradicted by the natural world, which everywhere reveals a hierarchical order among living things: ‘In the first place the plan is, of course, not mine at all, but nature’s. “Nature” has repeatedly been interrogated, often angrily, upon this very point – it is a burning question. Why does not nature produce a dense mass of Shakespeareans or Newtons or Pitts? That has been the idea; and means have been considered and plans worked out for assisting nature in this respect. But it is conceivable that nature after all may usually produce as many as are needed of these “persons,” and that this ratio may be according to some organic law we are too stupid or too conceited to grasp’ (P 74). In this passage, Lewis’s use of a naturalist account of human life elides its social dimension; differences between people are explained in terms of innate capacities, and the hierarchical model of society that emerges is viewed as nature’s own desideratum. To tamper with it is to go against a natural, organic order (shades of Burke) which we may be unable or unwilling to discern but which is no less there. Democracy’s attempt to overcome differentiation in the name of equal rights may even represent a revolt against this order, for ‘it is always possible that nature may not desire a structureless, horizontal jelly of a society, as does the modern democrat, but a more organic affair’ (P 74).

There are obvious parallels between Lewis’s political conception of society and his psychological conception of the individual. Even the imagery is similar. Just as the individual is conceived in terms of structure, organisation, and a harmonious hierarchy with reason at its apex, so society is conceived as an organic entity whose constituents are placed in a vertical structure with ‘natures’ above ‘puppets’. Democracy threatens to destroy this order, for the assertion of equal rights, he maintains, erodes a society’s ‘organic structure’, dispersing it into ‘millions of individual units’ (P 77), and overturns ‘the natural law of what is due to character, to creative genius, or to personal power, or even to their symbols’ (P 78). Lewis’s political ‘solution’ to what he sees as the problem of social levelling is the rigid separation of humanity into two distinct groups on the model of a caste system. This system is to be based not on class but, following the distinction between ‘puppets’ and ‘natures’, on biological fitness. He urges us to ‘imagine a separation not the result of a skin-deep “power,” or of social advantage, but something like a biological separating-out of the chaff from the grain’ (*TABR* 128). This separation, in turn, which ‘would be like a deep racial difference’ dividing ‘mankind into two rigorously separated worlds’ does not, for Lewis, imply superiority or inferiority but rather a fundamental distinction between ‘kinds’: ‘A beaver does not compare itself with a walrus or an antelope. There is no “upper” and “lower” between a cat and a dog. So it would be with the new species of man’ (*TABR* 127).

For me, these arguments are chilling, and Lewis’s politics in *The Art of Being Ruled* and *Paleface* deeply objectionable. I want in the remainder of this section to consider Lewis’s position on its own terms in order to point out some of its internal inconsistencies, focus on the political danger of relying on the notion of the ‘person’, and suggest that Lewis’s views disclose a tension between two incompatible perspectives.
The first problem with Lewis’s position concerns the question of hierarchy. He suggests in *The Art of Being Ruled* that his division of mankind into two ‘species’, each henceforth inhabiting a different world, can finesse the debilitating notion of social rank. Arguing that these species differ from each other like a cat from a dog or a walrus from an antelope, he maintains that no hierarchy is implicit in this picture. This claim is undermined just two pages later when he claims that he is not himself writing ‘as an aspirant for the highest biologic honours’ (*TABR* 129). Furthermore, the distinction between ‘natures’ and ‘puppets’ is clearly a hierarchical one. It is ‘natures’ alone who are capable of independent thought and action; puppets, after all, are inanimate objects whose strings are always being worked by someone else. *Paleface* builds its critique of democratic theories of rights on the basis of this distinction and explicitly argues in favour of a hierarchical political system in which only some warrant the designation ‘person’.

This brings me to a deeper problem. The division into ‘puppets’ and ‘natures’ has to bear a good deal of weight in Lewis’s account. Claiming that it is sanctioned by the natural order itself enables him to argue not only that it cannot be overcome but also that those whom he labels ‘puppets’ have no wish to become ‘natures’: ‘There is very little sign that the majority of people desire to be “persons” in any very important sense: their conversation about “developing their personality” is a sentimental habit, merely, it would seem. If they were cured of this habit nothing would ever be heard of their “personality” again. But government on a democratic pattern entails an insistence upon these mythical “personalities” on the part of their rulers: so the habits remain and flourish’ (*P* 75). It is hard to know how, empirically, one could substantiate such an observation, but even if one could, the real problem with such language lies elsewhere – a claim about psychology (that most people don’t wish to develop their personalities) is being used to buttress arguments for a hierarchical political system. For within Lewis’s carefully argued account the epithet ‘person’ carries a specific *political* meaning; obligations are owed to others not because they are human beings but because they are ‘persons’. In this context to claim that most people do not seem to desire to be “persons” is not just to make a psychological observation (however questionable it might be) but is to assign them a quite specific place in the socio-political system. Martha Nussbaum has shown that replacing the notion of the ‘human being’ with that of the ‘person’ has led in the past to various forms of political exclusion, since the latter term ‘has in history been applied and withheld extremely capriciously’.

For Nussbaum, to grant another humanity is to ‘grant that they have needs for flourishing that exert a moral pull on anyone who would deny them’ (*HF* 227). In contrast to Lewis’s restrictive use of the term ‘person’, Nussbaum urges us to base our ethics and politics on a conception of the human being: ‘Acknowledging this other person as a member of the very same kind would have generated a sense of affiliation and responsibility; this was why the self-deceptive stratagem of splitting the other off from one’s own species seemed so urgent and so seductive. And the strategem of denying humanness to beings with whom one lives in conversation and some form of human interaction is a fragile sort of self-deceptive tactic, vulnerable to sustained and consistent reflection and also to experiences that cut through self-deceptive rationalization’ (*HF* 226).

The difficulty with the objections I’ve made, however, is that I don’t think either *The Art of Being Ruled* or *Paleface* are entirely consistent in their support of the distinction between ‘natures’ and ‘puppets’ and of the hierarchical politics it ratifies. For one thing, Lewis does not properly address the question of how it is to be decided who belongs to which of the two ‘species’ he identifies. The little he says on this issue suggests support for some kind of system of vocational exams. This suggests that at some level Lewis is not only thinking of a meritocracy.
based on aptitude but also acknowledging the possibility of social mobility. Yet the idea of exams — for which one can study or be trained and which one may fail or pass — sits uneasily with the idea that individuals belong to biological ‘species’, for by no imaginable effort could one ever transcend membership of that particular group. The notion of some kind of biological fixity, which assigns people to camps from which they cannot move, is undermined in three other ways: first, by Lewis’s recognition that the average individual’s inability to think independently ‘is not a question of intelligence or of aptitude so much as one of training’ (TWM 248); second, by his own practice as a writer, for his avowed goal in his critical works is precisely to demystify contemporary conditions and thinking for ‘any fairly intelligent man’ (P 109); third, by the absence of the language of compulsion in his account — although he tends to see aptitude (and therefore function) in terms of innate abilities, Lewis nowhere suggests that people should be forced to perform certain social roles but rather implies that they should choose the kind of life they wish to lead on the basis of their interests and skills. ‘Puppets’ and ‘natures’ may then not be so distinct from one another, even on Lewis’s own account. There can be little doubt that an individual’s defining aptitudes were for Lewis by and large pre-cultural predispositions, and that he was sceptical of political theories that erased the distinctions between individuals which he saw as indispensable to a healthy polis. (And here the affinities with Nietzsche are strong.) Yet the importance of the social dimension to the way subjectivity is constituted and to the forms it takes is clear from his works of the period; his commitment to social critique fully attests this fact. There is a tension here. On the one hand he portrays differences between individuals as innate and views the attempt to overcome them by political means as flying in the face of natural law, but on the other hand he acknowledges that such differences are at least in part a question of paedeutics.

**Conclusion: The Cave-men of the New Mental Wilderness**

Lewis writes in *Rude Assignment* that throughout his life his primary interests have been ‘those of the civilised conditions’ (RA 154). His account of the self, which emphasises the importance of stability, consistency, and unity to coherent subjectivity, crucially relies on reason. He argues that the self is a plural entity which must nonetheless be unified if it is to function purposefully and that it can only be unified if it is governed by reason. In this view of subjectivity as a dynamic process individuals achieve integration by developing their inherent predispositions while providing a good deal of latitude to contradictory aspects of the psyche: equipoise is the goal. Meaningful identity is preserved neither by alienating one part of the self from another nor by casting its troublesome aspects into the mind’s cellarage through a process of repression but by forging its unavoidably plural nature into a working unity through a hierarchisation of ends.

Lewis’s polemical defence of this view of the self assumed the importance it did for him, because of his critical reading of modernity. The self was for him not just a bastion of stability and order in a disintegrating world but the sole place from which he could imagine a political and philosophical critique of it to emerge. For any such critique to be possible, clarity of thought and independence of mind were the basic prerequisites. Lewis argued, however, that modern life in almost all its aspects was rendering clear-sighted and rigorous intellect close to impossible, leading him to gesture towards ‘the desirability of a new, and if necessary shattering criticism of “modernity,” as it stands at present’ (P 106). How, except by means of the rational mind, could such a critique be mounted? His answer was unequivocal. Distancing himself from a dark demonic romanticism associated with figures such as Byron and Nietzsche, he invoked ‘*the daimon* of Socrates’ and remarked that if ‘we do not entirely throw him over, he can yet be
our saviour" (P 148). Socrates’ daimon was of course the god Apollo who required him to follow the path of philosophy and to encourage others to examine their lives. For Lewis, the consequences of not doing so were everywhere apparent – they led straight back into the cave of Plato’s famous simile: ‘We have been thrown back wholesale from the external, the public world, by the successive waves of the “Newtonian” innovation, and been driven down into our primitive private mental caves, of the unconscious and the primitive. We are the cave-men of the new mental wilderness. That is the description, and the history of our particular “subjectivity”’ (P 103).

Notes


8 Bergson, for example, argues that the intellect immobilizes the flux, enabling us to comprehend part of it, but by doing so petrifies it. See Henri Bergson, Matter and Memory, trans. Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1911), p. 275. William James, writing in support of Bergson, rejects ‘the platonic and aristotelian belief that fixity is a noble and worthier thing than change’ and that reality ‘must be one and unalterable’ in favour of an intuitive, non-conceptual immersion in the flux. See William James, A Pluralistic Universe, ed. Fredson Bowers and Ignas K. Skrupskels (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1977), p. 106.


11 Lewis is suspicious of generalisations about ‘Western Man’ or of a given ‘age’, but he certainly has a critical account of ‘modernity’ himself. For his reservations about such generalisations see Time and Western Man, ed. Paul Edwards (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow Press, 1993), pp. 134–135, 150–151, and 291. Hereafter TWM.


16 Simmel makes a very similar argument. See Simmel, ‘Metropolis’, pp. 336–337.

In an interesting essay on the importance of Fichte to an understanding of the European intellectual context to Lewis's thinking in the 1920s, Philip Head suggests that his perception of the shift from public to private 'exposed (using Fichtean terms) the Absolute Ego to obstacles to its activity fundamentally unlike those which were apparent before 1914.' See Philip Head, 'Lewis and the Split Man', *Enemy News* 22 (Spring 1986): pp. 34–36, p. 36.


Lisa Tickner upholds a similar view towards the end of a recent article on Lewis, arguing that Lewis's work can be aligned with a modernism that sought to assert male vigour and ascendancy in response to women's encroachments into the public sphere. See *The Popular Culture of Kermesae: Lewis, Painting, and Performance, 1912–13*, *Modernism/Modernity* IV, 2 (April 1997), pp. 67–120.

Writing of von Hartmann's and Schopenhauer's account of the unconscious, for example, Lewis writes: 'Having got the brain down into the ganglia, and made of the body a commonwealth of Unconscious "Wills," we have taken the personality a step further on the road to destruction. The personality of the animal, in this way decentralized, and characterized essentially by will, not "thought," can be decomposed before our eyes' (*TWM* 317). 


Referring to these remarks, Fosbey suggests that Lewis believed Nietzsche's will to power led 'not beyond but more deeply into the nihilism that it purports to transcend.' Fosbey, *Wyndham Lewis*, p. 73.


Ibid., 442a–444c.


See Nietzsche, *BT*, p. 104.

Ibid., pp. 38–39.

James, *Pluralistic*, p. 112.


For James's rejection of Platonism, see *Pluralistic*, p. 106.


James, *Pluralistic*, p. 112.
18 Note how precisely Lewis inverts the Nietzsche of *Twilight of the Idols* here: "The harshest daylight, rationality at any cost, life bright, cold, circumspect, conscious, without instinct, in opposition to the instincts, has itself been no more than a form of sickness, another form of sickness — and by no means a way back to "virtue", to "health", to happiness" (T 44).


21 See Lewis, *TABR*, pp. 129 and 324.

22 See also Lewis, *P*, pp. 97–98 and 181–182.


24 See, for example, the following: 'The fashionable doctrines in psychology may without spenglerian phantasy be regarded as very much one with the social tendencies of the times. Is it too rash to assume that, with another kind of social structure, less deliberately fluid and destructive, more favourable to stability and to personal, secure and constructive achievements, we should have other psychological doctrines, as indeed all the Past seems to show us?' (*TWM* 343).