

C.S. Lewis' Demonic Pairs: Trump v Harris

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October 10, 2024

In today's polarized political climate, voters are often presented with binary choices, each side claiming moral superiority while demonizing the other. C.S. Lewis, in his classic work *Mere Christianity*, warned against the dangers of such oppositional thinking, calling it a tool of "demonic pairs." According to Lewis, the devil often presents two extreme, yet equally harmful, paths and lures people into choosing one by making them fear the other. This concept is profoundly relevant to the 2024 U.S. presidential election between Donald Trump and Kamala Harris. Both candidates embody opposing extremes—Trump representing populist nationalism and Harris symbolizing progressive liberalism—leading voters to focus on rejecting one side while embracing the other. In this paper, we explore how Lewis's idea of demonic pairs applies to this election, revealing the dangers of falling into reactionary thinking. By analyzing both candidates through Lewis's moral framework, we offer insights into how voters can engage in thoughtful discernment, seeking wisdom beyond the simplistic binary of today's political landscape.

Keywords: C.S. Lewis, demonic pairs, Trump, Harris, 2024 election, oppositional errors, political polarization, moral discernment, binary thinking, reactionary politics, virtue.

Note: Verbatim GPT-4o for documentation.

I. Introduction

Overview of C.S. Lewis's Concept of Demonic Pairs



"The devil always sends errors into the world in pairs--pairs of opposites. And he always encourages us to spend a lot of time thinking which is the worse. You see why, of course? He relies on your extra dislike of the one error to draw you gradually into the opposite one."

— C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

C.S. Lewis, in his classic work *Mere Christianity*, warns of a subtle and dangerous strategy employed by evil forces, which he terms "demonic pairs." This concept stems from his observation that human beings are often presented with two seemingly opposing errors—both equally damaging but appearing as natural opposites. The devil, Lewis suggests, thrives on these pairs of errors, distracting people from true wisdom by pushing them to focus on one extreme in order to avoid the other. In doing so, people often fall into the opposite error, believing they have made a wise choice simply because they have rejected the more obvious wrong.

For Lewis, the danger lies in the human tendency to oversimplify complex moral, theological, and even political issues. When faced with a difficult choice, people often swing toward what appears to be the safer or more morally sound option, only to find that they have adopted a position that, in different ways, is just as harmful. In *Mere Christianity*, Lewis writes, "The devil always sends errors into the world in pairs—pairs of opposites. And he always encourages us to spend a lot of time thinking which is the worse. You see why, of course? He relies on your extra dislike of the one error to draw you gradually into the opposite one."

Lewis's insight is clear: the focus on rejecting one extreme can blind people to the dangers of its opposite. This not only distracts them from seeking a balanced, virtuous path, but it also deepens polarization, making it harder to see the fuller picture of truth or goodness. The devil's tactic is to ensure that people feel they are making the right decision simply because they are avoiding one obvious error, without realizing they are sliding into another trap. Lewis's goal, then, is to call for discernment and balance, urging people to resist the urge to reduce complex issues into simple binaries.

Application to Modern Politics

In the context of contemporary politics, particularly in highly polarized environments, Lewis's idea of "demonic pairs" is strikingly relevant. The 2024 U.S. presidential election, which pits Donald Trump against Kamala Harris, provides a clear illustration of how oppositional errors can dominate public discourse. This election, like many modern political contests, has become emblematic of extreme polarization, where voters are asked to choose between two drastically different visions for the country.

On one side, Donald Trump represents a strong, populist, and nationalist vision, often marked by divisive rhetoric, an emphasis on "law and order," and a focus on undoing what he sees as the excesses of progressive liberalism. His supporters often view Kamala Harris and her policies as dangerous overreaches into personal freedom, economic stability, and national security, categorizing them as emblematic of an overly permissive, chaotic left-wing agenda.

On the other side, Kamala Harris is seen as a counter to Trumpism, symbolizing progressive ideals, social justice, and the rejection of authoritarianism. Her supporters view Trump's presidency as an era of corruption, division, and erosion of democratic norms, framing Harris as the candidate who will restore balance, fairness, and inclusivity. To them, rejecting Trump is paramount, as they see him as a threat to the very fabric of democracy.

This binary framing—where voters are forced to choose between two extremes, often out of fear of the other—is precisely the kind of oppositional error that C.S. Lewis warns against. In focusing on rejecting one perceived evil (whether it's the perceived authoritarianism of Trump or the progressive excesses of Harris), voters may find themselves embracing another form of extremism without fully considering the long-term consequences.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to explore how C.S. Lewis's concept of "demonic pairs" applies to the 2024 U.S. presidential election. By examining the candidacies of Donald Trump and Kamala Harris, this paper will analyze how political discourse has been shaped by oppositional thinking and how voters are drawn into supporting one extreme by their desire to avoid another. Using Lewis's

framework, this paper seeks to offer a path toward more balanced political engagement—one that avoids falling into the trap of simply choosing between two evils and instead focuses on seeking true wisdom, virtue, and discernment in political decision-making.

In this analysis, we will consider how both Trump and Harris represent extremes in American politics, each embodying what the other side fears the most. This paper will also explore how such a binary choice distracts voters from considering more nuanced alternatives or middle paths. Ultimately, this study will argue that Lewis's call for discernment, rather than reactionary thinking, offers valuable insights for modern political life, helping us move beyond the divisive "demonic pairs" that currently dominate electoral politics.

II. C.S. Lewis on Oppositional Errors

Oppositional Errors as a Tool for Distraction

C.S. Lewis's concept of oppositional errors is grounded in his broader understanding of how evil operates subtly within human thought and behavior. Rather than encouraging people to commit outright immoral acts, evil often distracts them by presenting false dichotomies—pairs of opposing errors that seem to force a choice between two extremes. Lewis argues that both options in such a pair are flawed, yet people are drawn into believing that by rejecting one, they must embrace the other.

This process works as a powerful tool for distraction. When individuals focus intensely on the dangers of one extreme, they feel compelled to adopt the opposite position as a safeguard. In doing so, they fail to see that both extremes can be equally harmful. The distraction lies in the assumption that by rejecting one error, they are choosing the right path, when in fact, they are simply sliding into another trap. This blinds them to the existence of a more balanced or virtuous middle ground.

In *Mere Christianity*, Lewis describes this as the devil's tactic, noting that "he relies on your extra dislike of the one error to draw you gradually into the opposite one." By encouraging individuals to spend their time determining which error is worse, the devil keeps them from seeing the bigger picture—true wisdom,

virtue, and moral discernment. Instead, people become fixated on avoiding the extreme they despise the most, which prevents them from recognizing that both errors may ultimately lead them away from the good.

How Oppositional Thinking Can Blind People to True Virtue or Wisdom

Oppositional thinking, at its core, is a reductionist approach to complex moral, political, and social issues. It simplifies choices into binary categories—right or wrong, good or bad, left or right. While such thinking can offer the comfort of clarity, it often blinds individuals to deeper truths and more nuanced solutions. When people are presented with a false choice between two extremes, they may feel they are making a moral decision by rejecting one error, but they fail to see that both options may lead them astray.

This kind of thinking not only distorts our perception of the world but also narrows our moral imagination. In focusing solely on rejecting one extreme, people may ignore opportunities for genuine virtue and wisdom, which often lie somewhere in between. By focusing on opposites, we reduce our ability to engage in true discernment, which requires us to weigh the merits and faults of all perspectives and to seek a balanced path.

An example of this can be found in the political arena, where voters may reject authoritarianism by embracing radical individualism or anarchism, believing that total freedom is the antidote to tyranny. However, as Lewis might argue, this swing from one extreme to the other ignores the need for a middle path that promotes both freedom and order. In this way, oppositional thinking blinds individuals to the possibility of a solution that encompasses the best aspects of both sides while avoiding their pitfalls.

Examples of How People Get Caught Up in Rejecting One Error, Only to Fall into Its Opposite

Lewis gives us a variety of examples to illustrate how people can become ensnared by oppositional errors. One such example is the tension between legalism and moral relativism in religion. On one hand, legalism—an excessive focus on rules and outward obedience—can lead to rigid, joyless expressions of faith, where love and grace are overshadowed by strict adherence to doctrine. In rejecting legalism, however, people may fall into the opposite error of moral

relativism, where all rules and moral standards are dismissed as unnecessary, leading to a life without discipline or accountability.

Both legalism and relativism are errors because they miss the mark of true virtue. Legalism loses sight of the inner transformation that faith requires, while relativism discards the idea that there are objective moral truths that guide human behavior. Lewis argues that true wisdom lies in rejecting both extremes and seeking a balanced approach, one that values both grace and moral responsibility.

In political terms, another example can be seen in the debate over freedom versus security. Some individuals may reject the idea of government overreach in the name of security, swinging too far in the direction of radical individualism or libertarianism, where any form of government control is seen as oppressive. On the other hand, those who prioritize security above all else may be willing to sacrifice personal freedoms for the sake of maintaining order. Both extremes are flawed: excessive freedom without structure can lead to chaos, while excessive security can lead to authoritarianism. The challenge, Lewis would argue, is to avoid both errors and to find a balance that protects individual rights while maintaining a functioning society.

Avoiding True Discernment in Moral and Political Decision-Making

One of the most significant consequences of oppositional errors is that they prevent true discernment. Discernment, for Lewis, is the ability to navigate complex moral situations with wisdom, balancing competing values and recognizing that the truth often lies between two extremes. Oppositional thinking, by contrast, leads people to believe that their choice is simple: reject one extreme and embrace the other.

In moral and political decision-making, this kind of thinking is particularly dangerous because it encourages reactionary behavior. Rather than thoughtfully considering all possible outcomes and the nuances of an issue, individuals act out of fear or animosity toward one side, which pushes them into the arms of the other. This limits the scope of their moral reasoning and blinds them to alternative perspectives that might offer more constructive solutions.

For Lewis, true discernment requires us to resist the temptation to think in binary terms. It demands that we step back from the false choices presented to us and engage in deeper reflection. Discernment is not about simply rejecting one error in favor of another; it is about weighing all factors and finding the path that best aligns with true virtue and wisdom.

Lewis's Call to Avoid Focusing on Binary Extremes in Favor of Deeper Moral Evaluation

At the heart of Lewis's warning against oppositional errors is a call for deeper moral evaluation. Rather than focusing on which error is worse, Lewis encourages us to seek the path of true virtue, which often lies between or beyond the extremes presented to us. This requires humility, patience, and a willingness to engage in thoughtful reflection rather than reacting out of fear or anger.

In the context of politics, Lewis's insight is particularly valuable. Modern political discourse often thrives on oppositional thinking, reducing complex issues into binary choices: left versus right, conservative versus liberal, authoritarianism versus anarchy. Lewis's call to avoid such binaries is a call to rise above the divisive rhetoric and to seek a more nuanced, balanced approach to governance and social issues.

For Lewis, the pursuit of virtue and wisdom involves rejecting the simplicity of oppositional thinking and embracing the complexity of real-world problems. True discernment requires us to look beyond the immediate errors in front of us and to ask ourselves deeper questions about what is truly good, just, and wise.

III. The Trump v Harris Election: A Case Study of Oppositional Errors

The 2024 presidential election, featuring Donald Trump and Kamala Harris, serves as a striking example of what C.S. Lewis described as "demonic pairs" of oppositional errors. Both candidates, and the broader political movements they represent, can be seen as reactions to each other's perceived extremes, with many voters drawn to one side largely as a way of rejecting the other. In this dynamic, the public discourse revolves around opposing extremes, pushing voters to focus on rejecting one candidate's flaws without critically assessing the dangers posed by the other. This section examines how Donald Trump and Kamala Harris

embody the oppositional errors that dominate American politics and how this binary framing distracts voters from seeking a balanced, thoughtful approach to governance.

Donald Trump as the Reaction Against Progressivism

Donald Trump's political career has largely been defined by his role as a reactionary figure, a direct response to the perceived excesses of progressive policies and the political establishment. His populist platform, which emphasizes nationalism, economic protectionism, and a rejection of political correctness, has resonated with a large segment of the American population that feels alienated by liberal policies. For many of his supporters, Trump represents a necessary corrective to what they see as an overreach by the progressive left in areas like identity politics, immigration, environmental regulation, and globalism.

Positioned as the Anti-Progressive Champion Trump's appeal is based on his strong opposition to progressive ideals, which many of his supporters view as threatening American traditions, economic stability, and cultural identity. His rhetoric often highlights the dangers of liberal policies, portraying them as chaotic, weak on law and order, and overly permissive. In this sense, Trump is not just running on his own platform but is also positioning himself as the antidote to progressive governance, painting the Democratic Party and figures like Kamala Harris as radical and out of touch with mainstream America.

Analysis of the Extreme Errors Trump Represents While Trump's opposition to progressive policies is central to his appeal, it also introduces a number of extreme errors that can be equally dangerous. One of the most prominent of these is authoritarianism, or the concentration of power in a single leader who rejects checks and balances. Trump's tendency to undermine democratic norms, his attacks on the media, and his refusal to accept the legitimacy of electoral outcomes all point to an authoritarian streak that threatens the integrity of democratic institutions.

In addition to authoritarianism, Trump's populism often encourages divisive rhetoric, pitting different groups against each other—whether it's rural vs. urban, white vs. nonwhite, or native-born citizens vs. immigrants. This divisive approach deepens social fractures and stirs resentment between different communities, making it harder to build consensus or foster unity. The rise of populist

nationalism under Trump also contributes to a sense of isolationism, where the U.S. withdraws from global alliances and institutions, weakening its position on the world stage.

The Distraction of Rejecting Progressivism at All Costs For many of Trump's supporters, the desire to reject progressive policies at all costs distracts them from recognizing the potential dangers of authoritarianism and divisive populism. In the minds of his base, the flaws of progressive governance—whether it be perceived as too lenient on immigration or overly focused on social justice—are so severe that they justify supporting Trump, even if he displays authoritarian tendencies. Lewis's concept of oppositional errors applies here: in their eagerness to reject one extreme (progressivism), Trump supporters may inadvertently embrace another extreme (authoritarianism), believing they are making a morally sound choice.

Kamala Harris as the Reaction Against Trumpism

On the other side of the political spectrum, Kamala Harris represents a direct reaction against Trumpism. As the vice president under Joe Biden and a prominent progressive leader, Harris embodies the values of the liberal left—championing issues like racial justice, climate action, healthcare reform, and gender equality. For many voters, she stands as the polar opposite of Trump, offering an inclusive, progressive vision that counters the perceived dangers of Trump's authoritarianism, divisiveness, and populism.

Harris Positioned as the Antidote to Trump Harris's candidacy is framed as a remedy to Trump's chaotic and divisive presidency. Her platform appeals to those who view Trump's policies as harmful to marginalized groups, reckless on the environment, and dangerously isolationist in foreign policy. Her advocacy for social justice, equity, and governmental oversight is seen by many as a necessary corrective to the excesses of the Trump era. Just as Trump's base views him as the antidote to progressivism, Harris's supporters see her as the answer to the moral and political crisis they believe Trump has caused.

Analysis of the Extreme Errors Harris Represents However, Harris's progressive stance also carries its own set of potential extreme errors. One of these is the overreach of identity politics, where political discourse becomes dominated by issues of race, gender, and identity to the point that it alienates segments of the

population that do not see themselves represented in these debates. Critics of identity politics argue that this focus can deepen divisions and foster resentment, as certain groups feel excluded or marginalized in the push for equity.

Additionally, Harris's economic policies, which emphasize higher taxes on corporations and the wealthy, expanded government programs, and increased regulation, raise concerns about government overreach. Critics argue that such policies could stifle economic growth, create unsustainable levels of government dependency, and centralize too much power in the hands of federal agencies. These economic policies, while aiming to rectify social inequalities, could also lead to unintended consequences, such as slowing down innovation or creating an overburdened welfare system.

The Distraction of Rejecting Trumpism Without Considering Unintended

Consequences For many of Harris's supporters, the urgency of rejecting Trump and his legacy of divisiveness distracts them from critically examining the potential flaws of progressive governance. The fear of Trump's authoritarianism, nationalism, and populism is so powerful that it pushes voters to fully embrace the opposite extreme without considering whether Harris's policies might carry their own risks. As Lewis's demonic pairs framework suggests, in their effort to escape the dangers of Trumpism, voters may be rushing into the arms of progressive policies that have their own set of pitfalls, such as governmental overreach or identity-based divisiveness.

Conclusion: A Cycle of Oppositional Errors

The Trump v Harris election exemplifies Lewis's concept of oppositional errors, where voters are trapped in a binary choice between two extremes. Trump represents a reaction against progressivism, while Harris represents a reaction against Trumpism. In both cases, voters are encouraged to reject one extreme in favor of another, without fully considering the dangers posed by the candidate they support. This dynamic distracts from true discernment and keeps the electorate locked in a cycle of oppositional thinking, preventing them from engaging in deeper, more balanced political evaluation.

The challenge, then, is for voters to break free from this cycle and seek a more nuanced understanding of the political landscape—one that avoids the extremes of both authoritarian populism and progressive overreach, and instead focuses on

fostering a governance model rooted in wisdom, balance, and genuine concern for the common good.

IV. The False Dichotomy of Political Polarization

Political polarization is one of the defining features of modern democratic societies, and it serves as fertile ground for what C.S. Lewis described as "demonic pairs." Polarization amplifies the human tendency to divide complex issues into simplistic, binary choices, pushing voters to align with one side primarily because of their opposition to the other. This binary thinking reinforces the perception that there are only two possible outcomes—each one presented as an extreme alternative to the other. In this section, we explore how polarization fosters oppositional errors, the role fear plays in reinforcing this dichotomy, and the psychological appeal of choosing the "lesser evil" rather than critically evaluating candidates and policies.

Polarization as a Reinforcement of Demonic Pairs

Political polarization intensifies the very oppositional errors that Lewis warns against. In a highly polarized political environment, public discourse becomes defined by the extremes, with little room for nuance or middle ground. Politicians, media outlets, and social movements all contribute to this phenomenon by framing political choices as stark, mutually exclusive opposites: one party's policies are presented as the only solution, while the other's are depicted as disastrous. This framework of opposition is a clear manifestation of Lewis's "demonic pairs," in which individuals are pressured to reject one extreme by embracing the other, with little consideration for alternative perspectives or more balanced approaches.

How Political Discourse Encourages Oppositional Thinking In modern politics, the language of opposition is pervasive. Candidates, commentators, and influencers often reduce complex issues to slogans or sound bites that frame the other side as the enemy. For instance, Trump's rhetoric often characterizes progressives as "socialists" or "radical leftists" who threaten to destroy the fabric of American society. In response, many of Harris's supporters view Trump and his followers as "fascists" or "authoritarians" who are eroding democracy and fundamental

human rights. This kind of language reduces political debate to a simple binary: us versus them, good versus evil.

This oppositional framing is not merely a rhetorical strategy but also a reflection of deeper societal divisions. People are increasingly clustering into echo chambers—both online and in real life—where they primarily interact with like-minded individuals. This reinforces their pre-existing beliefs and hardens their opposition to the other side, making compromise or nuance seem unnecessary, or even dangerous. By presenting elections as choices between two extreme opposites, political discourse reinforces the false dichotomy, trapping voters into the very errors that Lewis describes.

The Public's Tendency to See Elections as Binary Choices As political polarization deepens, the public increasingly sees elections as binary contests between opposing extremes. In the case of the 2024 election, the media and political pundits often portray the race between Trump and Harris as a battle for the "soul of the nation." This framing leaves little room for nuance or critical evaluation. Voters are encouraged to identify with one candidate not necessarily because they support all of their policies but because they feel they must reject the other candidate at all costs. The election is presented as a zero-sum game, where only one vision for America can prevail, and the other must be utterly defeated.

This binary choice reinforces the false notion that there are only two paths forward, and that rejecting one extreme necessarily means embracing the other. Lewis's concept of "demonic pairs" helps explain why this is so dangerous: by focusing on defeating the perceived evil of the other side, voters often fall into the opposite error, without realizing they are being manipulated into embracing an extreme that may be just as harmful. In this way, polarization distracts from deeper moral evaluation and prevents the electorate from engaging with the complexity of political issues.

The Role of Fear in Political Decision-Making

Fear plays a central role in reinforcing the false dichotomy of political polarization and fueling the embrace of oppositional errors. In highly polarized elections, fear of the "other side" becomes a dominant motivating factor for many voters. Rather than voting out of genuine support for a candidate's policies or vision for the country, many people vote out of fear of what the opposing candidate might

do if they win. This fear-based decision-making limits critical thinking and leads people to align with candidates who may not fully represent their values, simply because they are viewed as the lesser evil.

How Fear of the "Other Side" Fuels Oppositional Errors Lewis's concept of oppositional errors is deeply tied to the human tendency to react against perceived dangers. In the context of elections, fear of the opposing candidate often drives voters to extreme positions, leading them to embrace one candidate not because they support them wholeheartedly, but because they feel the other is far worse. This dynamic was evident in the 2020 election, and it remains true for the 2024 election. Trump supporters may not agree with every aspect of his governance, but their fear of progressive policies—on issues like immigration, race, and economic regulation—pushes them to support him as a bulwark against liberal overreach. Likewise, Harris supporters may feel uneasy about certain elements of her platform, but their fear of a return to Trump's style of governance motivates them to rally behind her.

This fear-driven decision-making is precisely what Lewis warns against. The focus on rejecting one extreme causes voters to fall into the opposite error, believing that their choice is the only viable alternative. Fear narrows the scope of political decision-making and prevents individuals from critically evaluating all aspects of the candidates' platforms. Instead, voters become locked into oppositional thinking, seeing the election as a battle between good and evil, when in reality, both candidates may represent flawed extremes.

The Psychological Appeal of Choosing the "Lesser Evil"

Another key element of oppositional errors in politics is the psychological appeal of choosing the "lesser evil." In a highly polarized election, voters often feel that they have no choice but to support one candidate, even if they have reservations about their policies or character. This phenomenon is particularly strong when both candidates are seen as deeply flawed, and the electorate feels trapped between two undesirable options. In this situation, many people justify their vote by telling themselves that they are choosing the "lesser evil"—the candidate who is less likely to cause harm, even if they are not ideal.

Why Choosing the "Lesser Evil" Is a Trap From Lewis's perspective, the notion of choosing the "lesser evil" is itself a form of oppositional error. It is a psychological

trap that leads people to focus on avoiding one extreme, without fully considering the potential dangers of the candidate they are supporting. By framing the election as a choice between two evils, voters are encouraged to lower their moral and political standards, accepting flawed leadership as inevitable.

This is especially relevant in the context of the Trump vs. Harris election, where both candidates have strong detractors and ardent supporters. For many Trump supporters, the idea of progressive governance under Harris is so frightening that they are willing to overlook Trump's authoritarian tendencies, divisive rhetoric, or controversial policies. Conversely, for many Harris supporters, the fear of a return to Trump's presidency is so powerful that they are willing to overlook potential overreach in her progressive platform or concerns about identity politics.

Choosing the "lesser evil" allows voters to justify their decisions without engaging in true moral discernment. Rather than critically evaluating all candidates on their merits and flaws, voters are encouraged to see their choice as a reaction to the greater evil posed by the other side. This dynamic reinforces the binary nature of oppositional errors, trapping voters in a cycle of fear-based decision-making and preventing them from seeking more nuanced, thoughtful alternatives.

Conclusion: Breaking Free from Fear and Oppositional Thinking

C.S. Lewis's insights into oppositional errors offer a valuable framework for understanding the dynamics of political polarization in modern elections. The Trump vs. Harris race exemplifies how fear of the "other side" and the false dichotomy of political discourse can lead voters into the trap of choosing between two extremes, without critically evaluating the full range of consequences. By framing elections as battles between good and evil, or by focusing on the fear of the "other," voters are distracted from deeper moral evaluation and true discernment.

To break free from this cycle, Lewis would argue that voters must resist the temptation to view elections as binary choices between two opposing errors. Instead, they should seek wisdom, balance, and a more nuanced understanding of the candidates and their policies. True discernment requires moving beyond fear and oppositional thinking, toward a more thoughtful and virtuous approach to political decision-making.

V. Moving Beyond Oppositional Thinking

C.S. Lewis's insights into oppositional errors highlight the importance of balance and discernment in moral and political decision-making. In a highly polarized political landscape, Lewis's call to avoid falling into the trap of oppositional thinking is more relevant than ever. Rather than seeing elections as binary choices between two extremes, Lewis encourages us to seek true wisdom, which often lies in the space between. This section explores how voters can move beyond the false dichotomy of "Trump vs. Harris" by focusing on values and policies rather than personalities, and by considering alternative approaches to political leadership.

C.S. Lewis's Call for Balance and Discernment

Lewis emphasizes the importance of balance and discernment in decision-making, warning against the tendency to reactively embrace one extreme simply to avoid the other. True wisdom, he argues, does not lie in choosing between two flawed options, but in thoughtfully weighing all aspects of a situation and seeking the path that aligns most closely with moral principles. This requires moving beyond simplistic, binary thinking and recognizing the complexity of real-world problems.

In the context of political elections, this means that voters must resist the temptation to view candidates solely through the lens of opposition. Instead of reacting out of fear or frustration with one side, Lewis encourages individuals to engage in a deeper process of discernment—evaluating candidates based on their policies, values, and ability to serve the common good. This approach requires patience and humility, as it forces voters to critically assess both sides and recognize that no candidate is without flaws.

The Importance of Pursuing True Wisdom, Which Lies Between Extremes

For Lewis, true wisdom often involves rejecting the extremes on both sides of an issue and seeking a more balanced, middle path. In the political sphere, this means recognizing that both Donald Trump and Kamala Harris represent extremes in their own way. Trump embodies the reactionary, populist right, while Harris represents the progressive left. While both sides may offer valuable insights or policies, focusing too heavily on either extreme can prevent voters from finding solutions that truly serve the nation's long-term interests.

By pursuing true wisdom, voters can move beyond reactionary politics and instead focus on policies that promote justice, peace, and stability. This requires a willingness to critically evaluate both candidates, rather than simply voting for the one who seems less harmful. It also involves recognizing that the best solutions may not come from the loudest or most extreme voices, but from thoughtful consideration of all available options.

How Voters Can Avoid Falling Into the Trap of Oppositional Errors

To avoid falling into the trap of oppositional errors, voters must shift their focus away from the personalities of the candidates and toward their policies, values, and potential impact. Modern political campaigns often emphasize personal attacks and inflammatory rhetoric, which can distract voters from the real issues at hand. By focusing on values and policies, voters can make more informed decisions based on the actual substance of the candidates' platforms, rather than their perceived identities or the emotional appeal of their speeches.

Focusing on Values and Policies Rather Than Personalities In highly polarized elections, it is easy to get caught up in the personalities of the candidates. Trump's brash style and Harris's progressive persona often overshadow substantive debates about policy. However, Lewis's call for discernment reminds voters that personal charisma or polarizing rhetoric should not be the basis for political decisions. Instead, voters should look at the values that underpin each candidate's platform and assess how these values align with their own principles.

For instance, voters might examine Trump's economic policies, his stance on immigration, or his approach to national security, weighing them against their own values of freedom, justice, and social stability. Similarly, Harris's positions on healthcare, racial justice, and environmental policy should be evaluated based on their long-term impact on society, rather than her status as a progressive icon. By focusing on values and policies, voters can avoid the distraction of oppositional thinking and make more thoughtful decisions.

The Middle Path in Politics

C.S. Lewis's concept of seeking a balanced middle path is particularly relevant in today's polarized political climate. The false dichotomy presented by the Trump vs. Harris narrative suggests that voters must choose between two extremes, with

no other options available. However, Lewis's philosophy encourages individuals to look beyond the binary and seek alternative paths that avoid the errors on both sides.

Potential Alternatives to the Binary Trump vs. Harris Narrative While the two-party system dominates U.S. politics, there are alternatives to the binary choice of Trump vs. Harris. Third-party candidates, independent movements, or grassroots political efforts often offer more nuanced perspectives that do not align with the extremes of either major party. These alternatives may provide voters with a chance to engage with different ideas and values that better reflect their personal principles.

For example, third-party candidates like those from the Libertarian or Green Party often offer platforms that blend elements from both conservative and progressive ideologies, offering more diverse policy solutions. Independent movements, such as those advocating for campaign finance reform or systemic change, also present opportunities for voters to reject the binary narrative and seek new approaches to governance.

The Need for Critical Evaluation of Policies, Regardless of Political Party or Ideology Another way to move beyond oppositional thinking is to critically evaluate each candidate's policies on their own merits, regardless of party affiliation. Too often, voters align themselves with a political party and vote along party lines, without critically examining the actual policies being proposed. Lewis's call for discernment reminds us that moral and political truth is not determined by party loyalty, but by the values and principles behind the policies.

For instance, a voter might support elements of Trump's economic platform but reject his stance on immigration. Conversely, they may agree with Harris on healthcare reform but disagree with her approach to identity politics. By evaluating each policy individually, voters can create a more nuanced understanding of how each candidate's proposals align with their own values.

Example of Third-Party Options, Independent Movements, or a More Nuanced Perspective on Leadership As an example of moving beyond the binary narrative, voters might consider third-party options like the Libertarian Party, which emphasizes limited government and personal freedom, or the Green Party, which focuses on environmental sustainability and social justice. These parties offer

policy platforms that differ significantly from the extremes presented by Trump and Harris, providing voters with alternative visions for the future of the country.

Additionally, independent movements such as the Forward Party, founded by Andrew Yang, seek to address the dysfunction of the two-party system by promoting reforms in areas like voting rights, campaign finance, and political transparency. These movements represent a more nuanced approach to leadership, focusing on pragmatic solutions rather than partisan ideology.

By considering these alternatives, voters can break free from the false dichotomy of Trump vs. Harris and engage with a broader range of political ideas. This aligns with Lewis's call for balance and discernment, as it encourages individuals to seek wisdom in a wide array of perspectives rather than being limited by oppositional thinking.

VI. Broader Implications: What Can We Learn from Lewis Today?

C.S. Lewis's philosophical, theological, and moral insights hold a profound relevance in today's political landscape, particularly in an era marked by extreme polarization, divisiveness, and fear-driven decision-making. His warnings against falling into "demonic pairs"—oppositional extremes that distract individuals from truth and wisdom—offer valuable lessons for modern political decision-making. In this section, we explore how Lewis's ideas can help elevate political discourse, moving beyond the traps of binary thinking to create a more thoughtful, balanced, and virtuous political environment.

C.S. Lewis's Relevance in Modern Politics

While C.S. Lewis is best known for his theological writings, his reflections on human nature and morality have wide-reaching implications beyond the religious sphere. In particular, his concept of oppositional errors provides a framework for understanding the dynamics of contemporary political polarization. In today's world, where political debates are increasingly defined by extremes—whether it's conservative versus liberal, authoritarian versus progressive, or nationalist versus globalist—Lewis's insights help us recognize the dangers of viewing political choices as simple, binary oppositions.

Lewis's core message in *Mere Christianity* is that evil often works by presenting false dichotomies that distract people from discerning the deeper truths. In political terms, this translates into the idea that both extreme positions may be flawed and that true wisdom lies in rejecting reactionary thinking in favor of a more balanced, nuanced approach. Lewis warns that by focusing too much on avoiding one extreme (for example, rejecting authoritarianism or progressivism), people can fall into the opposite extreme without realizing that both paths can lead to harmful consequences.

How Lewis's Theological and Moral Insights Apply to Contemporary Political Decision-Making In contemporary political decision-making, Lewis's call for moral discernment and balance challenges voters to look beyond the surface-level appeals of party politics and instead focus on the deeper values at stake. Modern elections, like the 2024 Trump vs. Harris race, often frame political choices in simplistic terms: one side represents the "good" and the other the "evil." However, Lewis encourages us to critically evaluate both sides and to recognize that neither party may hold a monopoly on truth or moral righteousness.

This insight applies not only to voters but also to political leaders. Lewis's warnings against pride and self-righteousness can serve as a reminder to political figures that humility and openness to dialogue are essential in public service. Rather than portraying political opponents as irredeemable enemies, leaders would do well to remember Lewis's call to resist divisiveness and instead seek common ground based on shared values like justice, compassion, and the common good.

Lessons from *Mere Christianity* on Avoiding Demonic Distractions in Public Discourse

In *Mere Christianity*, Lewis speaks about the devil's strategy of using "demonic distractions" to pull people away from the pursuit of truth. These distractions come in the form of oppositional errors—false dilemmas that make people believe they must choose between two flawed extremes. This idea has significant implications for public discourse in modern politics, where conversations are frequently reduced to "us versus them" mentalities, and complex issues are oversimplified.

Avoiding Demonic Distractions in Political Discourse Political debates often emphasize opposition to the other side rather than constructive discussion about policy solutions. For example, much of the rhetoric in the 2024 election focuses on rejecting Trumpism or progressivism, rather than engaging in substantive debates about how to address critical issues like healthcare, economic inequality, or climate change. In this polarized environment, voters are distracted by the need to “defeat” the other side, rather than focusing on what policies would truly benefit society as a whole.

Lewis's lesson here is to rise above these distractions and to engage in deeper, more thoughtful discussions. Rather than reacting emotionally or ideologically to political opponents, individuals are called to critically assess the policies and values at play. This means rejecting the temptation to demonize opponents and instead fostering dialogue that prioritizes the common good. Public discourse, in Lewis's view, should be rooted in the search for truth and wisdom, not driven by fear, anger, or a desire for victory over one's adversaries.

Restoring Political Discourse to a Higher Standard

One of the most critical implications of Lewis's work for modern politics is the call to restore political discourse to a higher moral and intellectual standard. In the polarized political climate of today, discussions are often dominated by sound bites, outrage, and personal attacks. This environment leaves little room for nuance or reasoned debate, as both sides are focused on winning at all costs, even if it means sacrificing integrity, honesty, or virtue. Lewis's vision of balanced thinking can help guide society toward a more thoughtful, virtuous approach to political engagement.

Encouraging a More Thoughtful and Balanced Political Environment Lewis's call for balance and discernment invites a shift away from reactionary, fear-driven politics and toward a political environment that values wisdom, compassion, and thoughtful analysis. In practical terms, this means that voters and leaders alike must prioritize truth over ideology, seeking to understand the complexities of issues rather than reducing them to simplistic binaries.

For example, in the Trump vs. Harris election, voters might focus less on the personalities of the candidates and more on the practical implications of their policies. Rather than framing the election as a battle between two extremes,

citizens could engage in discussions about how to balance competing interests—such as economic growth and social justice, or national security and personal freedoms. This would elevate political discourse to a higher standard, where virtue and reason guide decision-making rather than fear and tribalism.

The Role of Virtue and Moral Discernment in Transcending Divisive Politics

At the heart of Lewis's philosophy is the belief that moral discernment is essential for navigating complex issues. This applies to politics as much as it does to personal life. In highly polarized societies, moral discernment is often sidelined in favor of loyalty to one's party or ideology. However, Lewis would argue that true virtue requires individuals to rise above partisan loyalties and consider the broader implications of their choices.

In the political context, this means that voters should not simply choose the candidate who best represents their party or tribe but should critically evaluate the values and policies that each candidate represents. For example, rather than voting for Trump solely because he opposes progressive policies, or for Harris because she promises to counter Trump's influence, voters should ask deeper questions about the long-term consequences of each candidate's platform. What policies will truly promote justice, peace, and human flourishing? What values should guide the country's leadership in times of crisis?

By prioritizing moral discernment over party loyalty, individuals can transcend divisive politics and contribute to the creation of a political environment that values truth, justice, and the common good. In Lewis's view, this is not only a practical necessity but a moral obligation for anyone engaged in the political process.

Conclusion: Learning from Lewis in a Polarized World

C.S. Lewis's insights provide a valuable roadmap for navigating the challenges of modern political polarization. His warnings against oppositional errors and "demonic distractions" offer timeless lessons for individuals seeking to make thoughtful, virtuous choices in a highly charged political environment. By applying Lewis's ideas to contemporary politics, voters and leaders can move beyond the false dichotomies of "left vs. right" or "Trump vs. Harris" and focus on the deeper moral values that should guide political decision-making.

Ultimately, Lewis's call for balance, wisdom, and discernment serves as a reminder that politics is not merely a contest of wills or ideologies. It is, at its best, an opportunity to pursue justice, promote the common good, and uphold the values that sustain human dignity and flourishing. In a world increasingly divided by fear and partisanship, Lewis's message challenges us to restore political discourse to a higher standard—one where virtue, rather than fear, guides our choices.

VII. Conclusion

Summary of Lewis's Demonic Pairs in the Trump v Harris Election

Throughout this paper, we have examined the 2024 U.S. presidential election between Donald Trump and Kamala Harris through the lens of C.S. Lewis's concept of "demonic pairs," illustrating how both candidates represent oppositional errors that distract voters from true wisdom and moral discernment. As Lewis warned in *Mere Christianity*, evil often presents itself not as a single, clear wrong, but as two extremes, each tempting us away from balance and truth.

In the case of Trump and Harris, these oppositional errors manifest as two highly polarized extremes: Trump is positioned as the reactionary figure against progressive overreach, often embracing populist, nationalist, and authoritarian tendencies, while Harris is framed as the counter to Trumpism, representing progressive ideals that, if pushed too far, can lead to governmental overreach, identity politics, and economic centralization. Both candidates symbolize extreme responses to each other, forcing voters to choose between two flawed paths that each carry significant risks for the country's future.

Lewis's insight into oppositional errors reveals that by focusing too heavily on rejecting one extreme, we often find ourselves falling into the opposite error. In this election, many voters are drawn to Trump because they fear the consequences of Harris's progressive agenda, while others support Harris primarily out of a desire to stop what they view as Trump's dangerous authoritarianism. In both cases, voters are reacting to the perceived dangers of the other side, rather than critically evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of

each candidate on their own merits. This reactionary thinking creates a binary political environment that distracts from the pursuit of true wisdom and virtue.

Call for Discernment and Virtue in Political Choices

At the heart of C.S. Lewis's warning is the call for discernment—an essential quality in both moral and political decision-making. Discernment requires the ability to see beyond the simplistic binary of oppositional extremes and to seek a deeper understanding of the values and policies that guide our choices. Lewis urges us not to fall prey to fear-driven thinking or to the temptation to embrace one extreme simply because we oppose the other. Instead, we are called to pursue wisdom, balance, and virtue, especially in moments of great societal and political tension.

In the context of the 2024 election, this means voters must resist the urge to define their choices purely in opposition to the other side. Rather than casting a vote based solely on a rejection of Trump's nationalism or Harris's progressivism, voters should engage in a process of thoughtful reflection, asking which candidate's policies and values best serve the common good. This requires a willingness to critically evaluate both candidates, recognizing their flaws as well as their potential to address the country's most pressing challenges.

Avoiding Reactionary Thinking Lewis's emphasis on avoiding reactionary thinking is especially important in our current political climate. The rise of social media, 24-hour news cycles, and polarized rhetoric has made it increasingly difficult to engage in reasoned, thoughtful discourse. Many voters feel pressured to choose sides quickly, often based on emotional reactions rather than careful consideration of the facts. But Lewis reminds us that reactionary decisions, made in fear or frustration, often lead to the embrace of extremes that distract from true wisdom.

In light of this, Lewis's call for discernment is an appeal for patience and reflection in political decision-making. It encourages voters to step back from the noise of partisan rhetoric and to consider what is truly at stake in the election—not just in terms of immediate outcomes, but in terms of the long-term health of democratic institutions, the promotion of justice, and the protection of human dignity. By focusing on these deeper questions, voters can move beyond oppositional errors and make choices that are guided by virtue, rather than by fear or anger.

Seeking Balance and Wisdom Lewis’s ultimate message is one of hope: by embracing discernment and seeking wisdom, we can move beyond the divisive, reactionary politics that define much of today’s discourse. His call to avoid “demonic pairs” is a reminder that the path to true virtue often lies in the space between extremes, where thoughtful dialogue and critical reflection can lead to more just and balanced outcomes.

For voters in the 2024 election, this means seeking leaders who embody wisdom and balance, rather than those who thrive on division and oppositional thinking. It means engaging with the issues at hand not through the lens of fear, but with a focus on what policies will genuinely serve the common good and protect the most vulnerable members of society. Above all, it means recognizing that political decisions are moral decisions, and that as citizens, we have a responsibility to make choices that reflect our highest values of justice, compassion, and truth.

Final Appeal

In closing, this paper has demonstrated that the 2024 Trump vs. Harris election provides a clear example of the oppositional errors C.S. Lewis warned against in *Mere Christianity*. Both candidates represent extreme responses to each other, and the political discourse surrounding the election reinforces a false dichotomy that distracts voters from deeper questions of virtue and wisdom. Lewis’s call for balance, discernment, and moral clarity is a timely reminder that in politics, as in life, the most important decisions are those guided not by fear or partisanship, but by a commitment to truth and justice.

As we face the challenges of this election, let us heed Lewis’s advice: avoid the trap of oppositional thinking, and instead seek wisdom in the pursuit of policies and leaders that promote the common good. By doing so, we can transcend the divisiveness of our political moment and build a society that reflects the virtues we hold dear—justice, compassion, and the dignity of all people.

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