The Abolition of Man

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF C. S. LEWIS

Clive Staples (C. S.) Lewis was born in Northern Ireland to Albert James Lewis, a solicitor, and Flora Lewis, the daughter of a Church of Ireland clergyman. Growing up, Lewis—who adopted the nickname "Jack" as a young boy—lived in a house with parents and brother Warren called Little Lea in East Belfast. Lewis loved spending time in his father's massive library, and he lost his mother to cancer around the age of 10. Lewis entered Oxford University in 1916, but he was soon sent to France to fight in World War I. He was injured in 1918 and thereafter returned to Oxford, where he studied classics, philosophy, and English literature. From 1925–1954, he taught English literature in Oxford's Magdalen College. Though Lewis had been a staunch atheist since his teen years, he became a Christian in 1931 and remained a committed member of the Church of England for the rest of his life. During World War II, he delivered a series of radio addresses that became the basis for his famous work of apologetics, *Mere Christianity*. In 1954, Lewis became chair of Medieval and Renaissance Literature at Cambridge University's Magdalene College. Later in life, Lewis married Joy Davidman Gresham, an American woman with whom he had corresponded. She died just a few years later, in 1960, and Lewis followed her in 1963.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The contents of *The Abolition of Man* originated as a series of three lectures—the Riddell Memorial Lectures—which Lewis delivered at King's College, Newcastle (part of the University of Durham), from February 24–26, 1943. The Riddell Memorial Lectures were established in 1928 as a forum for the exploration of the relation between religion and contemporary thought. Though Lewis had himself converted to Christianity just a little more than a decade earlier, his lectures are also informed by his deep study of the Greek and Roman classics, philosophy, English literature, and even Norse myth. Especially in light of the devastation and psychological stress of Britain's involvement in World War II, Lewis was interested in reaching non-scholarly audiences, too: he delivered the radio lectures which became *Mere Christianity* around the same period that he prepared and delivered his Riddell lectures.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

That Hideous Strength (1945), the third book of Lewis's *Space Trilogy*, is a fictional development of the ideas which Lewis introduces in *Abolition of Man*, especially regarding the effects on everyday people of a world in which science and technological progress are unhindered by belief in objective values. At the time of *Abolition*'s publication, Lewis had already published *Mere Christianity*, perhaps his most famous nonfiction title, as well as *Out of the Silent Planet*, the first of the *Space Trilogy*; *Perelandra*, the second, would follow a few months later. Some of the works Lewis cites throughout *Abolition of Man* and in its Appendix include Plato's *Republic* (particularly Plato's tripartite model of humanity), Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics* (Aristotle speaks to the role of the emotions in ethics), *The Analects of Confucius*, and the Old and New Testaments of the Bible.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** The Abolition of Man, or, Reflections on education with special reference to the teaching of English in the upper forms of schools
- **When Written:** 1943
- **Where Written:** United Kingdom
- **When Published:** 1943
- **Literary Period:** Modernism
- **Genre:** Philosophical Lectures
- **Antagonist:** Gaius and Titius; improper education
- **Point of View:** First Person

EXTRA CREDIT

The Real Green Book. The textbook which Lewis dubs *The Green Book* is actually *The Control of Language: A Critical Approach to Reading and Writing*, which was published in 1939 by Australians Alexander (Alec) King and Martin Ketley. He refers to King and Ketley as "Gaius" and "Titius," which are fictitious stand-in names in classical Latin.

Dystopian Inspiration. Lewis's *That Hideous Strength*, the third of his *Space Trilogy*, was published two years after the Riddell Lectures. Echoing much of the material in the third lecture, the novel portrays a dystopia in which a small group of scholars seek to undermine belief in objective reality, thereafter controlling society on a supposedly scientific basis.

PLOT SUMMARY

In the first of three lectures, "Men Without Chests," C. S. Lewis begins by critiquing a secondary English textbook, which he calls *The Green Book* and whose authors he dubs Gaius and Titius. Lewis criticizes Gaius and Titius's treatment of emotion

in literature. He says that the authors reduce all statements of value to emotion, or sentiment, and give students the unintended message that all expressions of emotion are worthless. He criticizes another author, Orbilius, on similar grounds—Orbilius rejects all anthropomorphic language as irrational, without distinguishing between good and bad uses of the literary device. Both these approaches deprive students of certain riches of their literary heritage.

Lewis thinks that authors like Gaius and Titius are misguided in their excessive fear of sentimentalism. The real problem with modern students, he believes, is that their sentiments have not been properly trained. Lewis believes that this is because modern educators no longer believe in objective value. That is, they do not believe that objects (like a beautiful waterfall) intrinsically merit certain human responses. Thus any expression of a human response is regarded as a statement merely about the speaker's psychology, not a statement of an objectively merited value.

Lewis cites a range of traditions—Platonic, Aristotelian, Christian, Hindu, and Taoist—which he sums up as the "Tao." The Tao is a repository of beliefs in which objective value is upheld: objective value being "the belief that certain attitudes are really true, and others really false, to the kind of thing the universe is and the kind of things we are." Modern education, as exemplified by Gaius and Titius's *Green Book*, rejects the Tao. Moreover, it rejects the ancient, Platonic conception of the human being as one whose reason rules the appetites by means of the emotions, or sentiments—"the head rules the belly through the chest." Today's educational system, consequently, produces "**Men Without Chests**."

In his second lecture, "The Way," Lewis argues that modern educators are dangerous for society because they try to get beyond the Tao in order to discover supposedly more basic values beneath the traditional ones. He discusses a hypothetical Innovator who seeks a rationalistic basis for the belief that it is good to die for one's country. He argues that, even if the Innovator could prove that it is more rational to die for the sake of society than to refuse to die, he would still need to prove that society is worth preserving. Bare rationalism, in other words, will not get the Innovator where he desires to go. Similarly, the Innovator will not find much help in instinct as a way of getting underneath traditional values. Because all people wrestle with conflicting instincts, there must be some external basis for distinguishing between them.

Because neither rational propositions nor instinct provide a stable alternative to the Tao, the best the Innovator can do is to select bits and pieces from the Tao, without being able to justify the elevation of one bit over another (for instance, how can he choose between duty to one's children and duty to one's parents?). Lewis concludes, therefore, that the Tao is the basis for all value systems, and that it must be accepted or rejected as a whole. This does not mean that the Tao can never change or develop. However, a development from within—by someone who already understands and accepts the Tao—is different from an innovation imposed from without.

In the third and final lecture, "The Abolition of Man," Lewis considers what happens when people think of the Tao as just one among many aspects of "Nature" that humanity now has the power to conquer. What, in fact, does the "conquest of Nature" mean? Lewis argues that in the case of technologies like airplanes, the radio, or contraception, power over nature really means "a power exercised by some men over other men with Nature as its instrument." Eventually, this means that a select group of people will succeed in shaping others—through such means as eugenics and propaganda—into whatever they wish. While oppression has always been present in societies, modern governments and technologies wield the potential for far greater oppressive power. And unlike past generations, they are unfettered by any sense of fidelity to the Tao. By stepping outside the Tao, such people are no longer recognizably human in any traditional sense. By achieving victory over humanity itself, they have attained "the abolition of man."

Lewis argues that modern humanity cannot have it both ways: we must either have rational spirits which are subject to the Tao, or we are raw material to be manipulated at will by select masters who are subject only to their natural impulses. Perhaps modern science can still be salvaged, such that it can harness the powers of nature without itself being conquered. On the other hand, perhaps modern analytical methods inherently destroy things in the process of trying to examine them. Lewis concludes with the warning that the whole point of trying to see through something is so that one can see something beyond it—like a garden through a window. Trying to "see through" things, like objective values, for its own sake is nonsense—it leads to a world in which everything is transparent, and in which seeing is therefore the same as not seeing.

CHARACTERS

C. S. Lewis – C. S. Lewis (1898–1963) was a British author, professor of English literature, and Christian apologist. He is most well-known for authoring *The Chronicles of Narnia* children's series as well as Christian theological books like *Mere Christianity* and *The Screwtape Letters*. In 1943, he delivered the three philosophy lectures contained in *The Abolition of Man* at King's College, Newcastle. In doing so, Lewis sought to critique an English textbook written by Gaius and Titius (and, by extension, the ideologies and methodologies commonly used to teach English at the time). He believed that following such curricula, which denied that things have objective value, would result in "**Men Without Chests**"—students who lack "right sentiments," or emotions that are properly aligned with reason. Thus, according to Lewis, these "Men Without Chests" would

be dehumanized and lack the ability to recognize or embody proper morality as outlined in the Tao. This emphasis on upholding morality and the unique qualities of humanity extends to Lewis's other writing, as he heavily incorporated aspects of the Christian value system into both his fiction and nonfiction works. In particular, Lewis's *Space Trilogy* focuses on what he viewed as a troubling trend of dehumanization in science fiction literature.

Gaius and Titius – Gaius and Titius are pseudonyms which C. S. Lewis supplies to mask the identities of Alec King and Martin Ketley, authors of the 1939 textbook, *The Control of Language: A Critical Approach to Reading and Writing*, which Lewis refers to as *The Green Book* and critiques in *The Abolition of Man*. Lewis argues that because Gaius and Titius do not believe in objective value, they inadvertently impart harmful philosophies to the English students who use their textbooks.

Orbilius – Orbilius is another author with whom C. S. Lewis deals more briefly in *The Abolition of Man*. The name is a pseudonym which Lewis uses to mask the identity of E. G. Biaggini, author of the 1936 textbook *The Reading and Writing of English*. Lewis critiques Orbilius chiefly for offering a superficial explanation of the use of anthropomorphism in literature.

TERMS

The Tao – In *The Abolition of Man*, **C. S. Lewis** adopts the Chinese philosophical term *Tao* to encompass what he considers to be the broadly accepted, traditional moralities of both Eastern and Western cultures—including Platonic, Hindu, Taoist, Christian, and others. He argues that this *Tao*, or Way, is the basis for all objective principles and therefore of human virtue. In short, the *Tao* refers to the belief "that certain attitudes are really true, and others really false, to the kind of thing the universe is and the kind of things we are." Throughout *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis argues that modern abandonment of the *Tao* endangers society by producing Men Without Chests.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

EDUCATION, EMOTIONAL SENTIMENT, AND ETHICS

The Abolition of Man originated as a lecture series that C. S. Lewis delivered at the University of Durham in 1943, critiquing current methods of teaching English and their implications for broader society. He bases his argument on an English textbook he was asked to review, which he refers to as *The Green Book*, and he gives its authors the pseudonyms Gaius and Titius. Lewis staunchly attacks Gaius and Titius's educational approach, because they reject belief in objective reality. In particular, Gaius and Titius do not believe that things objectively merit particular human sentiments (e.g., to them, a waterfall is not objectively beautiful), and, in fact, they attack the value of sentiment in literature altogether. Lewis, on the other hand, believes that proper sentiments—that is, emotions that are in harmony with objective reality—can and must be taught. By evaluating Gaius and Titius's approach as contradictory to history and reason, Lewis argues that the cultivation of sentiment is not only a valid part of modern education, but critical for the formation of ethical human beings.

Gaius and Titius, according to Lewis, are fundamentally mistaken about the validity of sentiment, or emotion, in education. While they see sentiment as irrelevant to reality and therefore dispensable, Lewis argues that properly trained sentiments are vital for well-educated people. Lewis posits that Gaius and Titius "have honestly misunderstood the pressing educational need of the moment." Whereas Gaius and Titius think that the day's youth are too sentimental, Lewis has observed the opposite in his own teaching: "For every one pupil who needs to be guarded from a weak excess of sensibility there are three who need to be awakened from the slumber of cold vulgarity." The current problem isn't too much sentiment, in other words; it's the wrong kind of sentiment.

Lewis goes on, "The right defence against false sentiments is to inculcate just sentiments. By starving the sensibility of our pupils we only make them easier prey to [propaganda]." Lewis means that eradicating sentiment doesn't actually defend students against false, manipulative ideas (e.g., in advertising or wartime propaganda). It just makes them less capable of recognizing such false sentiments for what they are. In contrast to Gaius and Titius's view, then, Lewis believes that students must be trained to hold "just sentiments"—emotions that are trained to be in harmony with objective reality (which Lewis will define more closely later, when he discusses traditional values).

Even if Gaius and Titius were to agree with Lewis that students should be taught "just sentiments," they would have no basis for teaching such sentiments. This is because they don't believe that objects inherently merit particular sentiments—an approach that Lewis argues is divorced from history and disastrous for the future. Lewis argues that, "Until quite modern times all teachers [...] believed the universe to be such that certain emotional reactions on our part could be either congruous or incongruous to it—believed, in fact, that objects did not merely receive, but could merit, our approval or

disapproval, our reverence or our contempt." In other words, the premodern assumption was that things objectively merited certain emotional reactions. For example, "The man who called the [waterfall] sublime was not intending simply to describe his own emotions about it: he was also claiming that the object was one which merited those emotions." That is, as opposed to Gaius and Titius's claim, the man was expressing a just sentiment—the waterfall is sublime—that lines up with what's objectively true about the waterfall.

By rejecting this older approach, therefore, Gaius and Titius place themselves outside of a perspective that has prevailed throughout history. Lewis names St. Augustine and Aristotle as just two of the venerable predecessors with whom Gaius and Titius find themselves out of accord: "St Augustine defines virtue as [...] the ordinate condition of the affections in which every object is accorded that [...] degree of love which is appropriate to it. Aristotle says that the aim of education is to make the pupil like and dislike what he ought." Gaius and Titius's modern approach robs students of the ability to be virtuous—that is, to love the right things in the appropriate measure.

The result of the inadequate modern approach is that students will be incapable of understanding ethics: whereas "the pupil who has been thus trained in 'ordinate affections' or 'just sentiments' will easily find the first principles in Ethics," the one who has not "can make no progress in that science." The ultimate outcome can only be harmful for society. Lewis will develop this idea further in subsequent lectures, but his comments about propaganda effectively preview his point. A student whose sentiments have not been properly trained will be susceptible to propaganda and other forms of manipulation (or even to manipulating and otherwise harming others), because he or she lacks a stable basis for determining what is truthful, good, and just.

OBJECTIVE VALUE, HUMAN VIRTUE, AND SOCIETAL HEALTH

After establishing the importance of rightly-formed emotional sentiment in modern education, Lewis develops his underlying principle of the Tao—a concept that must not be confused simply with Taoism, because it is "Platonic, Aristotelian, Stoic, Christian, and Oriental alike." While these various worldviews might seem to defy generalization, Lewis contends that they have a very important principle in common: "It is the doctrine of objective value, the belief that certain attitudes are really true, and others really false, to the kind of thing the universe is and the kind of things we are." By establishing "objective value" as the bedrock of all human civilization, Lewis argues that, by neglecting this concept, modern education produces "**men without chests**" (people who lack properly trained sentiments) who are not capable of sustaining a flourishing society.

In order to make his argument that recognizing objective value is paramount to education, Lewis first establishes that emotions can be either be reasonable or unreasonable. Lewis argues that because our liking or disliking of things is a response to objective value, then our emotional states can be either in harmony with reason or out of harmony with reason. "No emotion is, in itself, a judgement [...] But [emotions] can be reasonable or unreasonable as they conform to Reason or fail to conform. The heart never takes the place of the head: but it can, and should, obey it." For Lewis, emotions should follow reason. But this doesn't occur naturally—rather, it must be taught. The role of education, then, is to train the emotions to become "just sentiments" (i.e., emotions that are in harmony with objective reality).

Lewis argues that emotions must be trained in order to properly align with what is objectively morally right. Lewis believes that, just as Plato taught that the appetites must be ruled by reason, "The head rules the belly through the chest"—the "chest" is "the seat [...] of emotions organized by trained habit into stable sentiments." That is, the chest is the metaphorical "liaison [...] between cerebral man and visceral man." Lewis means that neither bare intellect nor untaught emotion is sufficient to make a person virtuous.

Therefore, emotions must be trained by objective reason to become just sentiments that will guide a person's views and actions throughout life. Lewis sees this as an indispensable process for creating a well-rounded human being: "It may even be said that it is by this middle element [sentiment] that man is man: for by his intellect he is mere spirit and by his appetite mere animal." The problem with *The Green Book* and similar textbooks popular during Lewis's time is that they tend to "produce what may be called Men without Chests," or people who are intelligent but devoid of an emotional or moral compass.

In Lewis's view, the reason that these "Men without Chests" are dangerous is that, without individuals having properly trained sentiments, civilization as a whole is endangered. A civilization that produces "men without chests" can't expect virtue from its citizens: "And all the time [...] we continue to clamour for those very qualities we are rendering impossible. [...] We make men without chests and expect of them virtue and enterprise. We laugh at honour and are shocked to find traitors in our midst. We castrate and bid the geldings be fruitful." In other words, if people are not trained to hold proper sentiments and value judgments, they cannot be expected to behave in ways that are widely acknowledged to help society prosper and thrive.

Nevertheless, Lewis says, educators like Gaius and Titius are obviously not trying to corrupt society. They uphold certain values as desirable, or else they would not teach at all: "They write in order to produce certain states of mind in the rising generation, if not because they think those states of mind intrinsically just or good, yet certainly because they think them

to be the means to some state of society which they regard as desirable. […] For the whole purpose of their book is so to condition the young reader that he will share their approval [...].” Gaius and Titius, in other words, seek to commend certain ways of thinking that they presumably see as correct and desirable, even if they reject objective values.

This being the case, argues Lewis, Gaius and Titius are actually not being critical *enough*. They take their own values for granted, without offering students any clear means of assessing those values for themselves: “Their scepticism about values is on the surface: it is for use on other people’s values; about [their own] they are not nearly sceptical enough.” Lewis implies that Gaius and Titius are themselves “Men without Chests,” and that their approach will produce a generation of students who, like them, are dangerously uncritical in their thinking.

TRADITIONAL VALUES VS. INNOVATION

After arguing for the existence of the “Tao,” or the objectivity of value and ethics, Lewis goes on, “Let us suppose that an Innovator in values regards *dulce et decorum* and *greater love hath no man* as mere irrational sentiments which are to be stripped off in order that we may get down to the ‘realistic’ or ‘basic’ ground of this value. Where will he find such a ground?” Here, Lewis cites two culturally familiar sayings—the first, from Horace, “It is sweet and seemly [to die for one’s country],” and the second from the New Testament, “Greater love hath no man than this, that [he] lay down his life for his friends.” Then, Lewis examines whether a hypothetical “Innovator”—a person who wishes to get beyond the Tao in order to build an alternative value system—can defend the idea of putting one’s life on the line for one’s country *without* recourse to traditional sentiments, or teachings of the “*Tao*.” Lewis comes to the conclusion that neither rationality nor instinct can provide the basis for such an alternate value system and therefore that even such an Innovator cannot avoid appealing to the Tao. By demonstrating that neither reason nor instinct alone can motivate action, Lewis argues that belief in traditional value systems like those that make up the Tao is indispensable, no matter how an innovator tries to find alternatives to it.

Lewis argues that pure reasoning isn’t a sufficient basis for a sustainable value system. Lewis contends that, if an Innovator tries to eradicate sentiment from his argument, he will be helpless to defend a value such as dying for one’s country: “Every appeal to pride, honour, shame, or love is excluded by hypothesis. To use these would be to return to sentiment and the Innovator’s task is, having cut all that away, to explain to men, in terms of pure reasoning, why they will be well advised to die that others may live.”

Having shorn his argument of sentiment, an Innovator has no basis to defend either dying or *not* dying for one’s country: “From propositions about fact alone no practical conclusion can ever be drawn. *This will preserve society* cannot lead to *do this* except by the mediation of *society ought to be preserved*. *This will cost you your life* cannot lead directly to *do not do this*.” Lewis means that bare, unadorned fact *must* be supported by sentiment in order to proceed to a clear course of action. In other words, why would someone choose to put his life at risk in order to preserve society, unless he believed that society was worth it? Or conversely, why would he *not* put his life at risk unless he believed that society isn’t worth the cost of his life? By relying on reason alone, the Innovator can never get where he wishes to go; he can never figure out how to act.

When the Innovator finds that pure reason fails, Lewis argues, the Innovator will then attempt to find a basis for an alternate value system in instinct. Lewis argues that the Innovator will reject the path of reason anyway, because “practical principles known to all men by Reason are simply the *Tao* [or natural law] which he has set out to supersede.” In seeking alternate grounds for commending a certain value, “he is more likely […] to hunt for some other ground even more ‘basic’ and ‘realistic’. […] This he will probably feel that he has found in Instinct.”

To an extent, instinct seems to serve the Innovator’s purposes much better than mere reason. “We have an instinctive urge to preserve our own species […] that is why scruples of justice and humanity—in fact the *Tao*—can be properly swept away when they conflict with our real end, the preservation of the species […] For of course sexual desire, being instinctive, is to be gratified whenever it does not conflict with the preservation of the species. It looks, in fact, as if an ethics based on instinct will give the Innovator all he wants and nothing that he does not want.” The Innovator, in other words, finds justification for rejecting social norms where they seem to get in the way of instinct.

The innovator runs into difficulty, however, in that this approach gives him no basis for choosing between *competing* instincts. In fact, what he is doing is favoring one bit of the Tao over another, with no apparent justification. For example, duty to one’s kin “because they are our own kin, is a part of traditional morality. But side by side with it in the *Tao*, and limiting it, lie the inflexible demands of justice, and the rule that, in the long run, all men are our brothers. Whence comes the Innovator’s authority to pick and choose?” Once again, according to Lewis, the Innovator who rejects the *Tao* is at an impasse.

According to Lewis, then, the Tao must be taken or rejected as a whole. Lewis concludes that “This thing which I have called for convenience the *Tao*, and which others may call Natural Law or Traditional Morality […] is not one among a series of possible systems of value. It is the sole source of all value judgements. If it is rejected, all value is rejected. If any value is retained, it is retained.” Any single component of the Tao, in other words, can only be understood in relation to and in the context of the rest.

Without being properly situated in this way, any bit of the Tao becomes nonsense.

When fragments of the Tao are "arbitrarily wrenched from their context in the whole and then swollen to madness in their isolation," innovations collapse; "the rebellion of new ideologies against the Tao is a rebellion of the branches against the tree." According to Lewis, an innovator cannot reject one bit of the Tao as mere superstition without relegating all of it to the realm of superstition; similarly, he can't elevate another portion of it above the rest without validating the whole. Ultimately, then, innovation simply isn't sustainable against the weight and comprehensiveness of traditional morality, whether one calls it the Tao, natural law, or something else.

Finally, it is worth nothing that, by commending traditional morality, Lewis isn't arguing that no ethical advances are possible. For an example, he argues that the Confucian saying, "Do not do to others what you would not like them to do to you," was later advanced upon by the Christian teaching, "Do as you would be done by." That is, the latter could not be advanced without acknowledging the validity of the former, which provides a basis for its own later expansion. By contrast, the ethics of a modern thinker like Nietzsche only work if one accepts that there is no basis for value judgments whatsoever. The Tao, in Lewis's view, is enduring precisely because it contains the resources for its own creative development.

NATURE, SCIENCE, AND THE ABOLITION OF MAN

In his final lecture, Lewis finally arrives at the idea of "the abolition of man." So far, he has argued for the indispensability of reason-based sentiments in education, the continued validity of objective value, and the emptiness of innovations that are not grounded on traditional principles. Now, in his climactic lecture, he builds on these ideas by describing modern science as an attempt to conquer nature and thereby to mold humanity to the conquerors' liking. Lewis diagnoses the drive to harness nature as ultimately being about the arbitrary power of select human beings over others. In other words, Lewis argues that when "science" replaces morality as the basis for human motivation, civilization will be fundamentally dehumanized.

In Lewis's view, power over "nature" really means the power of some people over others. As an example, Lewis discusses contraception: "By contraception simply, [future generations] are denied existence; [...] From this point of view, what we call Man's power over Nature turns out to be a power exercised by some men over other men with Nature as its instrument." In other words, talking about the conquest of "nature" is a euphemism for the dominance of some people over others. In this case, Lewis believes that speaking of contraception as a form of power over nature is a euphemism for the fact that, by controlling the existence or nonexistence of future generations, contraception is an exertion of power by some people over other people.

Such "conquest," however, won't stay abstract forever—Lewis says that he is "only making clear what Man's conquest of Nature really means and especially that final stage in the conquest, which, perhaps, is not far off. The final stage is come when Man by eugenics, by pre-natal conditioning, and by an education and propaganda based on a perfect applied psychology, has obtained full control over himself. Human nature will be the last part of Nature to surrender to Man." Lewis means that little by little, people will apply science—or manipulate nature—in ways that seek to shape, control, and dominate other people, in increasingly tyrannical ways.

Ultimately, Lewis posits, humans exerting power over nature will inevitably lead to an attempt to manipulate human beings into the shapes desired by the powerful—resulting in the loss of what makes them essentially human. Lewis explains, "In the older systems both the kind of man the teachers wished to produce and their motives for producing him were prescribed by the Tao—a norm to which the teachers themselves were subject and from which they claimed no liberty to depart. They did not cut men to some pattern they had chosen. They handed on what they had received: [...] This will be changed." When values are mere "natural phenomena," then "[j]udgements of value are to be produced in the pupil as part of the conditioning. [...] It is one more part of Nature which [the conditioners] have conquered." In other words, teachers used to see their job as inducting students into a tradition that predated both the students and the teachers themselves. Lacking this guide, teachers will try to produce students according to their own unrestrained whims.

Lewis argues that this situation is dangerous for humanity: "The Conditioners, then, are to choose what kind of artificial *Tao* they will [...] produce in the Human race. They are the motivators, the creators of motives. But how are they going to be motivated themselves? [...] At the moment, then, of Man's victory over Nature, we find the whole human race subjected to some individual men, [...] to their irrational impulses." When victory over nature is followed to its logical extreme, then, according to Lewis, it is finally just a power play. When the "conditioners" of humanity aren't subject to any external, objective motivations, they will end up controlling humanity according to unpredictable, ungovernable whims.

Lewis concludes, "It is not that they are bad men. They are not men at all. Stepping outside the *Tao*, they have stepped into the void. Nor are their subjects necessarily unhappy men. They are not men at all: they are artefacts. Man's final conquest has proved to be the abolition of Man." In other words, from producing "**men without chests**," modern education goes on to eradicate those objective values that make human beings what they are meant to be—removing from humanity the things that

make it enduringly human.

Lewis adds that a supposedly scientific attempt to get beyond "first principles" is a fool's errand: "You cannot go on 'seeing through' things for ever. The whole point of seeing through something is to see something through it. It is good that the window should be transparent, because the street or garden beyond it is opaque. […] If you see through everything, then everything is transparent. But a wholly transparent world is an invisible world. To 'see through' all things is the same as not to see." He is not rejecting the importance of science wholesale. Rather, he is arguing that science oversteps its bounds when it reduces the world to scientific principles that can be manipulated and controlled. When the world is flattened out in such a way, it ceases to be recognizably human.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

MEN WITHOUT CHESTS

In the first of the three lectures contained in *The Abolition of Man*, C. S. Lewis uses the idea of "Men Without Chests" to symbolize human beings who lack what Lewis sees as "right sentiments," or emotions that properly align with logical reasoning. Lewis argues that "The head rules the belly through the chest"—or, in other words, that human beings are properly governed by "emotions [the belly] organized by trained habit [the head, or reason] into stable sentiments [the chest]." In contrast to past eras, modern education, in Lewis's view, tends to produce "Men Without Chests"—and then demands from its students moral values and virtues which, lacking well-formed sentiments, students are not equipped to recognize or embody.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the HarperOne edition of *The Abolition of Man* published in 2015.

Chapter 1 Quotes

He will have no notion that there are two ways of being immune to such an advertisement—that it falls equally flat on those who are above it and those who are below it, on the man of real sensibility and on the mere trousered ape who has never been able to conceive the Atlantic as anything more than so many million tons of cold salt water. […] None of this is brought before the schoolboy's mind. On the contrary, he is encouraged to reject the lure of the 'Western Ocean' on the very dangerous ground that in so doing he will prove himself a knowing fellow who can't be bubbled out of his cash. Gaius and Titius, while teaching him nothing about letters, have cut out of his soul, long before he is old enough to choose, the possibility of having certain experiences which thinkers of more authority than they have held to be generous, fruitful, and humane.

Related Characters: C. S. Lewis (speaker), Gaius and Titius

Related Themes:

Page Number: 9

Explanation and Analysis

In this quote, Lewis criticizes a specific example given in the English textbook by "Gaius and Titius" (really King and Ketley). Gaius and Titius present an advertisement for a recreational cruise, criticizing its use of the historical figure of Francis Drake to heighten the appeal of an Atlantic voyage. Gaius and Titius criticize this usage as misleading. Lewis argues that in doing so, Gaius and Titius fall short of useful literary criticism. The advertisement, he explains, doesn't appeal to either the truly sophisticated reader or the uneducated one, but Gaius and Titius don't explain *how* it falls flat. They stay on a literal level, as if the appeal to Drake were meant to be taken seriously, and as if the discerning reader ought to reject the cruise on the grounds that they *won't* actually get to sail the ocean in the manner of Drake. For Lewis, this exemplifies Gaius and Titius's failure to instill genuine sentiments in their young students. They reject all emotional appeal, but in doing so, they deprive students of a vast literary tradition that enriches their humanity.

The task of the modern educator is not to cut down jungles but to irrigate deserts. The right defence against false sentiments is to inculcate just sentiments. By starving the sensibility of our pupils we only make them easier prey to the propagandist when he comes. For famished nature will be avenged and a hard heart is no infallible protection against a soft head.

Related Characters: C. S. Lewis (speaker), Gaius and Titius

Related Themes:

Page Number: 14

Explanation and Analysis

Lewis critiques Gaius and Titus by saying that they have fundamentally the wrong idea about modern education. Gaius and Titius's textbook displays their presumption that sentiment needs to be rooted out of young people (hence "cut down jungles"). This leads to a rather barren, superficial treatment of literature which Lewis despises. Lewis, on the other hand, believes that modern students don't generally have too *much* sentiment; they have too little, or the wrong kind altogether. So the solution is to "irrigate deserts," or stir to life a well-rounded sensibility in young people. He further argues that, contrary to Gaius and Titius's expectation, cutting out sentiment doesn't make students *less* susceptible to propaganda, especially if their intellects are not sufficiently discerning, either. A feeble sentiment can be readily swayed. In other words, Lewis's view of the educator's task is to create a balanced, well-nourished nature—as opposed to a "famished" one—including sound sentiments that cannot be easily manipulated.

> This conception in all its forms, Platonic, Aristotelian, Stoic, Christian, and Oriental alike, I shall henceforth refer to for brevity simply as 'the Tao.' Some of the accounts of it which I have quoted will seem, perhaps, to many of you merely quaint or even magical. But what is common to them all is something we cannot neglect. It is the doctrine of objective value, the belief that certain attitudes are really true, and others really false, to the kind of thing the universe is and the kind of things we are.

Related Characters: C. S. Lewis (speaker), Gaius and Titius

Related Themes:

Page Number: 18

Explanation and Analysis

Here Lewis introduces his concept of the *Tao*, which is central to the argument he builds in the *Abolition of Man* lectures. For Lewis, the Tao is not equivalent to the Chinese philosophy which goes by the name of Taoism. Rather, this "Way" encompasses a vast spectrum of Western and Eastern philosophical and religious ideas. But what all these ideas hold in common is belief in objective principles, according to which human beings are expected to order their lives. Lewis does not delve into many of the specific parallels and distinctions that could be drawn between belief systems as diverse as Greek philosophy, Christianity, or Hinduism (as, indeed, each of these is diverse in itself). And while he does open himself to criticism by claiming that these systems contain broadly equivalent values, his larger claim is that most pre-modern belief systems uphold a form of objective value which has only recently been subject to question. Lewis goes on to argue that when the Tao is rejected, people lose track of the nature of the universe and of their *own* nature, with disastrous consequences.

> We were told it all long ago by Plato. As the king governs by his executive, so Reason in man must rule the mere appetites by means of the 'spirited element'. The head rules the belly through the chest—the seat [...] of emotions organized by trained habit into stable sentiments [...] these are the indispensable liaison officers between cerebral man and visceral man. It may even be said that it is by this middle element that man is man: for by his intellect he is mere spirit and by his appetite mere animal.

Related Characters: C. S. Lewis (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 25

Explanation and Analysis

In this quote, Lewis introduces his famous concept of "Men Without Chests." The idea derives from Lewis's reading of Plato, particularly the Greek philosopher's works *The Republic* and *Timaeus*. Plato divided the human being into three parts, which can roughly be translated as the reason, emotion, and appetite. Lewis (who, as a scholar of medieval literature, would have been well versed in Platonic conceptions of the human being) likens this tripartite system to a king (reason) ruling the lower orders (appetite) by means of his executive (his emotions). It can also be imagined as the head ruling the belly by means of the chest. Lewis explains that the chest (or heart) is where the emotions reside—but these emotions have been trained by reason (the head) such that they can rule the appetites (the belly) appropriately. For Lewis, this middle element between ethereal intellect and visceral appetite is the essence of the person. He will go on to argue that, by failing to create

balanced sentiments in students, the modern educational system is creating "men without chests," or students whose malformed sentiments lack the capacity to properly mediate between mind and appetite.

Chapter 2 Quotes

❝ For the whole purpose of their book is so to condition the young reader that he will share their approval, and this would be either a fool's or a villain's undertaking unless they held that their approval was in some way valid or correct. In actual fact Gaius and Titius will be found to hold, with complete uncritical dogmatism, the whole system of values which happened to be in vogue among moderately educated young men of the professional classes during the period between the two wars. Their scepticism about values is on the surface: it is for use on other people's values; about the values current in their own set they are not nearly sceptical enough.

Related Characters: C. S. Lewis (speaker), Gaius and Titius

Related Themes:

Page Number: 28

Explanation and Analysis

In the first of his three lectures, Lewis introduced the idea of the *Tao*, or a broad compendium of ideas of objective value found throughout the world's religious and philosophical traditions. Rather than upholding this traditional outlook, he argues, Gaius and Titius—authors of the English textbook Lewis attacks in the first lecture—unhook themselves from this sturdy sense of objective value. But this is not the same thing, Lewis maintains, as saying that the authors do not uphold *any* system of values which they believe to be right—if that were the case, why would they author a textbook to begin with? In the endnotes to *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis pieces together aspects of Gaius and Titius's unconscious value system by listing the things of which they approve throughout their textbook (peace; democracy; sanitation) and disapprove (appeals to bravery, gentlemanliness, or feelings of patriotism). His point is not to pigeonhole them in a particular belief system, but to point out that everyone is situated within a certain cultural context which shapes their values, and that often these values are accepted and perpetuated without conscious awareness. The authors may interrogate other people's values, but they don't interrogate their own. The question, then, becomes how to discern between a valid belief system and an invalid one.

❝ At this point the Innovator may ask why, after all, selfishness should be more 'rational' or 'intelligent' than altruism. The question is welcome. If by Reason we mean the process actually employed by Gaius and Titius when engaged in debunking (that is, the connecting by inference of propositions, ultimately derived from sense data, with further propositions), then the answer must be that a refusal to sacrifice oneself is no more rational than a consent to do so. And no less rational. Neither choice is rational—or irrational—at all. From propositions about fact alone no practical conclusion can ever be drawn. *This will preserve society* cannot lead to *do this* except by the mediation of *society ought to be preserved*. *This will cost you your life* cannot lead directly to *do not do this*. It can lead to it only through a felt desire or an acknowledged duty of self-preservation.

Related Characters: C. S. Lewis (speaker), Gaius and Titius

Related Themes:

Page Number: 31

Explanation and Analysis

In this section of his second lecture, Lewis introduces the idea of an "Innovator" who sets out to uncover a more basic value system than the Tao, or the bank of traditional morality embodied in the world's historic religions. He seeks to show that the Innovator—especially if he tries to proceed on the basis of pure rationality—will inevitably run into problems in establishing an alterative value system. As a test case, Lewis uses the traditional idea that it's honorable to die for one's country. He argues that the rationalist Innovator will be unable to claim that it is more rational to selfishly refuse to die for one's country than to altruistically agree to do so (or vice versa). This is because the argument that, for instance, dying for one's country will preserve society is not convincing *unless* it can also be demonstrated that society is worth preserving. Lewis argues that the latter cannot be proven or disproven by means of rational propositions alone. In other words, some other factor is needed in order to arrive at the exhortation to act in a certain way (to die or not to die). Lewis will go on to argue that such a factor is only derivable from the Tao.

There has never been, and never will be, a radically new judgement of value in the history of the world. What purport to be new systems or (as they now call them) 'ideologies', all consist of fragments from the Tao itself, arbitrarily wrenched from their context in the whole and then swollen to madness in their isolation, yet still owing to the Tao and to it alone such validity as they possess. If my duty to my parents is a superstition, then so is my duty to posterity. If justice is a superstition, then so is my duty to my country or my race. [...] The rebellion of new ideologies against the Tao is a rebellion of the branches against the tree: if the rebels could succeed they would find that they had destroyed themselves.

Related Characters: C. S. Lewis (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 43

Explanation and Analysis

After demonstrating that his hypothetical Innovator cannot successfully establish an alternate value system, whether by means of rationality or appeal to impulse, Lewis argues that establishing such a system is actually impossible. This is because objective values—which accord with the cosmic order, in Lewis's view—are eternally enshrined in the Tao, and they only make sense as parts within that harmonious whole. Thus whenever people venture to create a new value system, what they are really doing is simply wresting fragments of the Tao out of context and exaggerating them beyond recognition. Lewis uses filial duty as an example—if the modern Innovator rejects this as mere superstition, then why does he not draw the same conclusion about duty to one's descendants? The same applies to any other bits of the Tao that might be set in opposition to one another. Such oppositions make no sense, because they are attempts to set tree and branches at odds.

[T]he Tao admits development from within. There is a difference between a real moral advance and a mere innovation. From the Confucian 'Do not do to others what you would not like them to do to you' to the Christian 'Do as you would be done by' is a real advance. [...] [This] is an advance because no one who did not admit the validity of the old maxim could see reason for accepting the new one, and anyone who accepted the old would at once recognize the new as an extension of the same principle.

Related Characters: C. S. Lewis (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 45

Explanation and Analysis

Lewis's concept of the Tao is not meant to be taken too literally. That is, he does not attempt to argue for an actual family tree of philosophical systems, and he also does not hold that the Tao is a frozen block of teachings that never changes or evolves. In this quote, Lewis gives the example of a Confucian teaching providing a basis for the later teaching, found in the Christian Gospel of Matthew, that one should do unto others as one would have others do unto oneself. The evolution is from a negative ("Do not do...") to a positive command. Lewis isn't saying that Jesus's Sermon on the Mount literally borrows and develops from Confucianism. His point is that the Christian restatement is not an innovation, but a development of an already broadly accepted piece of the Tao. Articulating a new statement on the basis of the old is entirely different, in Lewis's view, than arguing that the entire system of traditional morality is invalid and attempting to build something new from scratch.

Chapter 3 Quotes

Each generation exercises power over its successors: and each, in so far as it modifies the environment bequeathed to it and rebels against tradition, resists and limits the power of its predecessors. This modifies the picture which is sometimes painted of a progressive emancipation from tradition and a progressive control of natural processes resulting in a continual increase of human power. In reality, of course, if any one age really attains, by eugenics and scientific education, the power to make its descendants what it pleases, all men who live after it are the patients of that power. They are weaker, not stronger: for though we may have put wonderful machines in their hands we have pre-ordained how they are to use them.

Related Characters: C. S. Lewis (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 56

Explanation and Analysis

In the third of his three lectures, Lewis considers the phrase "man's conquest of nature"—cited at the time as an indication of humanity's newfound progress—in order to determine what it really means. He builds an argument that, in fact, "man's conquest over nature" actually means that a

small number of people attain power over other, weaker people. He even links this idea to the subject of contraception, which was openly controversial in the 1940s, including in Lewis's own Anglican church, which had only tepidly approved its use within the past decade. He argues that contraception is actually a form one generation exercising scientific power over subsequent ones. While he doesn't condemn contraception outright, Lewis uses it as an example to disprove the popular notion that society is straightforwardly progressing and growing stronger. Science, in fact, can exert power over future generations such that they are smaller, weaker, and less able to hold such power themselves, since their predecessors have already shaped so much of their reality.

❝ The second difference is even more important. In the older systems both the kind of man the teachers wished to produce and their motives for producing him were prescribed by the Tao—a norm to which the teachers themselves were subject and from which they claimed no liberty to depart. They did not cut men to some pattern they had chosen. They handed on what they had received: they initiated the young neophyte into the mystery of humanity which over-arched him and them alike. It was but old birds teaching young birds to fly. This will be changed. Values are now mere natural phenomena. Judgements of value are to be produced in the pupil as part of the conditioning. Whatever Tao there is will be the product, not the motive, of education.

Related Characters: C. S. Lewis (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 60

Explanation and Analysis

Lewis has been arguing that, while it is true that the few have always sought to exercise power over the many, modern conditions make this scenario much more threatening. The first difference is that the modern state simply wields much more omnipresent power, and scientific technique is much more advanced, such that power can be more broadly and more forcefully applied. But here Lewis discusses the second difference, which draws many of the themes of *The Abolition of Man* together. He argues that, in past generations, the Tao provided a checking and restraining influence on educators in their efforts to shape the young. The Tao was the motive for education, and educators saw their work as initiating students into a system to which they themselves were also subject. But if modern educators view the Tao as just another aspect of nature to be conquered, then they will lack a guiding framework for education and will not see themselves as subject to anything. They will be free, in other words, to initiate students into a "Tao" of their choosing—which gives these educators an unprecedented degree of power.

❝ From this point of view the conquest of Nature appears in a new light. We reduce things to mere Nature in order that we may 'conquer' them. We are always conquering Nature, because 'Nature' is the name for what we have, to some extent, conquered. The price of conquest is to treat a thing as mere Nature. Every conquest over Nature increases her domain. The stars do not become Nature till we can weigh and measure them: the soul does not become Nature till we can psychoanalyse her. The wresting of powers from Nature is also the surrendering of things to Nature. As long as this process stops short of the final stage we may well hold that the gain outweighs the loss. But as soon as we take the final step of reducing our own species to the level of mere Nature, the whole process is stultified, for this time the being who stood to gain and the being who has been sacrificed are one and the same.

Related Characters: C. S. Lewis (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 71

Explanation and Analysis

In this quote, Lewis draws his argument about "man's conquest over nature" to a close. He argues that this view of nature is harmfully reductive. In other words, by saying that the conquest of nature is a good thing, those with power are able to reduce anything—not just principles like the Tao, but also the people over whom they exercise power—to mere "nature," an abstract thing to be manipulated. As more and more things are reduced to "Nature," the realm of Nature becomes ever greater. The relentless dissection and analysis of things, from stars to human souls, becomes an ever-increasing form of power. When it reaches the point of reducing human beings to Nature, the process of conquest has officially outlasted its usefulness. This is because human beings—the ones for whom, supposedly, the process was begun—are now being victimized by the very process. So Lewis concludes that "man's conquest over nature" is actually a more sinister and destructive process than its

liberating exterior suggests.

> You cannot go on 'seeing through' things for ever. The whole point of seeing through something is to see something through it. It is good that the window should be transparent, because the street or garden beyond it is opaque. How if you saw through the garden too? It is no use trying to 'see through' first principles. If you see through everything, then everything is transparent. But a wholly transparent world is an invisible world. To 'see through' all things is the same as not to see.

Related Characters: C. S. Lewis (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 81

Explanation and Analysis

These are the closing sentences of *The Abolition of Man*, and one of the work's most well known quotes. Throughout the work, Lewis has warned that trying to "see through" things ultimately backfires. For example, trying to see beyond the Tao is self-defeating, because one can only try to build a new value system by distorting portions of the Tao. Likewise, trying to see through aspects of nature ultimately objectifies nature, even human beings themselves. Finally, Lewis concludes this argument by pointing out that one "sees through" something only in order to see something else, like a garden through a window. When a person stops seeing something else, he is, in fact, seeing nothing. Lewis's point is to throw into question the entire subjectivist leaning of modern education. Modern education, in his view, has ceased to take its motivation and goal from an enduring bedrock of humane values. With this gone, it will inevitably founder, because humanity—at least a humanity recognizable according to traditional values—will have been "abolished."

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

CHAPTER 1: MEN WITHOUT CHESTS

Lewis begins his first lecture by saying that he doubts that we pay enough attention to the importance of introductory textbooks. Therefore, he will base his lectures on an English textbook intended for students in the upper forms, of which he received a complimentary copy from the publisher. He warns in advance that he will not have much good to say about the authors. He will refer to the authors as Gaius and Titius and to the book as *The Green Book*.

The "upper forms" in an English school correspond roughly to secondary or high school education in the United States. Lewis uses an upper-form textbook as the jumping-off point for his lectures because it establishes the formative, though often implicit, function of such books for young people, and thus more broadly of society. The particular book to which he refers is Ketley & King's A Critical Approach to Reading and Writing.

In the second chapter of their textbook, Gaius and Titius quote "the well-known story of Coleridge at the waterfall." In this story, Coleridge overhears two tourists commenting on a waterfall—one calls it "sublime" and the other "pretty." Coleridge agrees with the first comment but rejects the second as unworthy of its object.

Lewis refers to British Romantic poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge, whose tour of Scotland with poet William Wordsworth was recounted by Wordsworth's sister Dorothy and is paraphrased by Gaius and Titius. Coleridge's assessment is based on his philosophy of aesthetics, which saw "sublimity" as a much elevated description of beauty.

Gaius and Titius, in turn, comment that when the first tourist calls the waterfall "sublime," he is not actually making a remark about the waterfall; he is making a remark about his own feelings—that is, "I have feelings associated in my mind with the word sublime [...] I have sublime feelings." Gaius and Titius go on to say that such confusion is common in English usage: a person appears to be saying something important about something, when in fact one is only talking about one's own feelings.

Gaius and Titius don't address Coleridge's distinction between the fittingness of different words. Rather, they see the use of descriptive language as saying more about the speaker than about the object being spoken about. Lewis's primary critique of Gaius and Titius will emerge here.

As an aside, Lewis argues that Gaius and Titius's claim isn't really an accurate way of talking about feelings. When someone calls an object "sublime," he or she is expressing feelings of *veneration* for the object, not sublimity. In other words, the admirer of the waterfall would more accurately say, "I have humble feelings"—the sort of feelings a sublime object evokes—not "I have sublime feelings."

Though it isn't a main part of his argument, Lewis argues that Gaius and Titius altogether misunderstand the way that feelings work in relation to objects—that is, "sublimity" is not a feeling to begin with.

When a student reads *The Green Book*, he or she will believe two things as a result: first, that all value statements are really statements about emotion; and, second, that such statements are unimportant. Gaius and Titius may not have intended to impart such ideas at all, and indeed, a young student may not be conscious of picking up on them. After all, a student won't suspect that ethics, theology, and politics are all wrapped up in studying English. Nevertheless, Gaius and Titius's implications will continue to operate in the student's subconscious for years to come.

Lewis argues that Gaius and Titius mislead students in a number of far-reaching, if unintentional, ways. They begin a process of devaluing sentiment in students' eyes, which, Lewis will argue, is fundamentally harmful—all the more because their philosophical ideas are implicitly wrapped up in the ostensible study of English.

Before considering Gaius and Titius's position about value in greater detail, Lewis seeks to show the practical results of their position on education. He critiques Gaius and Titius's own critique of an advertisement for a pleasure cruise. Lewis agrees with Gaius and Titius that the advertisement contains bad writing. However, if Gaius and Titius wish to demonstrate that the advertisement's writing is bad, Lewis says they should place the advertisement alongside examples of writing in which emotion is well-expressed.

Lewis argues again that Gaius and Titius fall short in their efforts at literary criticism, in this case because they don't offer a positive alternative to what they consider to be bad writing. This will later feed into Lewis's criticism that the authors fail to present a vision of objective value altogether.

Lewis argues that Gaius and Titius's critique of the advertisement fails, because all they do is criticize its use of metaphorical language and its association of the cruise with certain historical figures (like Drake sailing the Atlantic). This approach is inadequate because it doesn't really address the advertisement's lack of literary merit.—all it does is teach students that *any* appeal to emotional associations is unreasonable and to be rejected. Their approach, then, teaches more about being a shrewd consumer than about being a discerning reader of literature.

Lewis argues that Gaius and Titius's critique of the advertisement is superficial. It doesn't teach students the purported goal of evaluating literature, because it only evaluates language as an expression of the writer's psychology. This doesn't help students understand what good literature is, or—the argument Lewis is building toward—what enduring values are.

Lewis critiques a second book, by an author he names Orbilius. Orbilius criticizes an anthropomorphized treatment of animals—in which horses are praised as "willing servants" of early Australian colonists—by saying that horses aren't literally interested in colonial expansion. Orbilius doesn't mention the weeping horses of Achilles, or even Peter Rabbit. He doesn't offer students a means to distinguish between good or bad anthropomorphic expressions. Thus, students reading Orbilius haven't learned anything about English, and a bit of "the human heritage" has been taken from them without their knowing it.

Orbilius is Lewis's pseudonym for E. G. Biaggini, author of The Reading and Writing of English. *His criticism of Orbilius is more limited, but pointed. Orbilius's failure to engage with a broader literary tradition, according to Lewis, deprives students of the chance to learn something deeper about the use of anthropomorphism, instead remaining on the level of a facile literalism. This critique anticipates Lewis's broader argument about the value of tradition.*

Lewis doubts that Gaius and Titius set out to instill any philosophy in their readers. They have simply taken an easy way out of proper literary analysis—rationalistically attacking emotion, rather than attacking poor writing. What's more, Lewis argues, Gaius and Titius misdiagnose the most pressing educational needs of the moment. They see the day's youth as excessively sentimental, so they teach students to guard against emotion. Based on Lewis's own background as a teacher, however, he believes that Gaius and Titius are misguided on this point. He believes that for every student who needs to overcome "a weak excess of sensibility," there are three who are captive to "cold vulgarity."

Lewis doesn't attack Gaius and Titius's motives. In his view, they simply misunderstand what students need the most. Lewis disagrees that today's students are actually overemotional; it's more likely that their emotions aren't sufficiently formed. Thus Lewis is building off of his earlier criticism of Gaius and Titius's handling of emotion in other people's writing, moving on to establish a larger case for the proper role of emotion, or sentiment, in people's characters.

Lewis argues that the best way to guard against false sentiments is to instill just sentiments. If educators don't train students' sensibility, then students simply become susceptible to propaganda. A hard heart doesn't protect against a soft head, Lewis warns.

For Lewis, as opposed to Gaius and Titius, the problem is not the existence of sentiment, per se. It's rather that sentiment must be properly trained. Here Lewis is saying that a lack of sentiment doesn't inherently protect a student against the threat of propaganda, any more than an excess of sentiment does.

But, Lewis says, there is a third reason for Gaius and Titius's approach. He sets out to show that Gaius and Titius are in a different educational predicament than any of their predecessors. Until quite recently, Lewis argues, everyone believed that human emotional reactions could be either congruous or incongruous to the universe. In other words, it was assumed that objects didn't just receive, but could *merit* our approval or disapproval. For example, the reason that Coleridge—as Gaius and Titius cite him—objects to a tourist calling a waterfall "pretty" (as opposed to "sublime") is that he believes certain responses to nature are more "just" or "ordinate" than others.

Lewis approaches the heart of his argument—that sentiments have always been assumed to correspond to reality in some way. That is, sentiments aren't simply an interior, psychological event; they are reflective of something in the object that's provoking the sentiment. This, according to Lewis, is the more proper reading of Coleridge's remarks—Coleridge believed that "sublimity" was more befitting the inherent beauty of the waterfall. Gaius and Titius do not capture this.

St. Augustine defines virtue as *ordo amoris*—a condition of the affections in which objects are given the degree of love that's appropriate to them. Aristotle, likewise, describes education as training a pupil to like and dislike what he ought. A student who's been trained in these ways, Lewis says, will be suitably prepared to understand ethics; a student who hasn't will be helpless to understand that field.

Augustine was a North African theologian of the late fourth and early fifth centuries whose views on ethics were foundational for Western culture. Aristotle (Greek philosopher of the 300s B.C.) likewise viewed education as a process of training young people in virtue. Lewis will claim that these approaches are no longer taken for granted in Western culture.

Lewis also cites Plato's *Republic*, in which a "well-nurtured youth" is one who is trained from a young age to hate the ugly and praise the beautiful. Then, when he reaches an age to be receptive to Reason, the youth will already have an affinity for it. Similarly, in early Hinduism, good conduct was understood to consist in conformity to the cosmic order.

Greek philosopher Plato was Aristotle's teacher, and his dialogue, Republic, *was foundational in Western culture for its ideas on the just individual and the just city. Here Lewis also begins to show the breadth of his approach to ideas of ethics and values, not only limiting himself to Western works and thinkers.*

Lewis also cites the Chinese belief in the Tao, a reality that precedes creation. The Tao is the "Way" or "Road" in which the universe goes on. Human beings are to walk in imitation of that cosmic progression.

The Tao, although rooted in Chinese philosophy, will become the basis for Lewis's concept of absolute value. Here, he simply names it as another example of the common belief that human lives are meant to be lived in correspondence to deeper realities.

Such ideas—whether Platonic, Aristotelian, Western, Christian or Eastern—will henceforward be described by Lewis simply as "the Tao." What these conceptions have in common is an idea of objective value: "the belief that certain attitudes are really true, and others really false, to the kind of thing the universe is and the kind of things we are." Such an approach, in other words, holds that things demand reactions from people that are objectively true, that are not merely psychological facts. So, while human emotions are, in themselves, "alogical," they can conform to Reason or fail to conform to it. This outlook is exactly what *The Green Book* rejects.

Lewis introduces his idea of the Tao, which is not fundamentally a religious idea, but rather a kind of summary of the central posture of major Western and Eastern worldviews. That is, in Lewis's view, all these traditions believe in objective reality and call upon human beings to live accordingly. This is what Lewis has been getting at with his preceding discussion of rightly formed emotions, and The Green Book*'s failure to address this idea.*

Thus, one's relationship to the Tao determines one's view of the educational task. To one who stands within the Tao, the task is to train a pupil in appropriate responses. To one who stands outside of it, all emotions are equally non-rational, so the task is to remove all emotions altogether, or else try to instill emotions in a way that has nothing to do with their "ordinacy." The old kind of education, then, seeks to initiate pupils into a tradition—a transmission of something. The new kind just conditions students to receive propaganda.

The point of Lewis's discussion of the Tao is to connect it back to the educational task. One's attitude toward the Tao shapes the way one educates. By this measure, Gaius and Titius stand outside of the Tao, because they do not consider the question of the fittingness of emotions in the way the Tao calls for. The advantage of the Tao, for Lewis, is that it provides an objective basis for evaluating things; Gaius and Titius's approach does not, and because it ignores emotion, it leaves students vulnerable to propaganda.

Even though Gaius and Titius may set out to oppose propaganda, Lewis argues, their approach is ultimately no better. Without a belief in objective value, and hence having had one's emotions properly trained, it isn't possible to train a human being in virtue. Without such training, "the crudest sentimentalism" will serve better than a theoretical justification.

Lewis connects human virtue to the training of sentiment which, in his view, is only possible with a belief in objective value. He also holds that unsophisticated sentiment will tend to be more naturally connected to the Tao than the imposition of a bare theory.

Lewis explains that, long ago, Plato taught that human Reason must rule the appetites. In other words, "The head rules the belly through the chest," by "emotions organized by trained habit into stable sentiments." Such trained sentiments, Lewis says, are the crucial factor that mediates between people's minds and their instincts. What *The Green Book* and similar books do is produce "**Men Without Chests**." It's not that Gaius and Titius, then, are too intellectual—it's that they lack "fertile and generous emotion."

Lewis draws here on the tripartite view of the human person which one finds in Book IV of Plato's Republic*. This view sees sentiment as a kind of middle ground between the cerebral part of a person and the lower appetites—in other words, the heart. When this part of a person remains undeveloped, his or her intellect or appetites will rule unchecked. Letting the intellect take over is, Lewis indicates, the greatest risk for people educated according to Gaius and Titius.*

Even as modern education buys into the kind of training that Gaius and Titius offer, society "[continues] to clamour for those very qualities we are rendering impossible." People demand things like dynamism and creativity while having cut out the human capacities for such things: "We castrate and bid the geldings be fruitful."

When the "heart," or sentiments, of a person remain undeveloped, many of the traits ostensibly valued by society remain out of people's reach. His metaphor here refers to horses, framing human society as similar to a horse that has been castrated and then told that it must nonetheless reproduce. From his critique of a single textbook, Lewis has built an argument that an education devoid of sentiment produces inadequate "fruit" for society as a whole.

CHAPTER 2: THE WAY

Lewis argues that "The practical result of education in the spirit of *The Green Book* must be the destruction of the society which accepts it." He sets out to demonstrate the theoretical reasons that this is the case. Lewis begins by pointing out that, even if Gaius and Titius do not believe in objective value, they obviously *do* believe in bringing about certain desirable states of mind in students. In other words, they clearly hold that *some* state of affairs is good for its own sake.

In this lecture, having established the necessity of objective value in the previous lecture, Lewis now argues that the effects of The Green Book *and its outlook are disastrous for society. Careful not to assign false motives to Gaius and Titius, he nonetheless points out that they do have goals for what they produce in their students; otherwise, they wouldn't bother having an educational perspective at all.*

Lewis argues that this desirable state is "the whole system of values which happened to be in vogue among moderately educated young men of the professional classes during the period between the two wars." Gaius and Titius are notably uncritical about these values. And this is typical: many who seek to debunk "sentimental" values don't critique their *own* values enough. Such people try to cut "away the parasitic growth of emotion, religious sanction, and inherited taboos," in order to make space for so-called real, basic values instead.

Lewis argues that Gaius and Titius are so immersed in their own context that they are not conscious of it, and so do not question it adequately. The leaning of modern education is to try to dig beneath those values which are seen as being insufficiently rational or as prejudiced; but in doing so, Lewis believes, educators are not attentive enough to the views which influence them.

Lewis next considers what happens when this "cutting away" is seriously attempted. He uses as his example the idea that it is "sweet and seemly" to die for one's country. He proposes that an "Innovator in values" sought to strip down the ideals of *Dulce et decorum* to the basic value supposedly underlying it. Such an Innovator might say that its value lay in the utility of someone's death to his community. But even if this is established, on what grounds can it be established that some should die for others—especially if values like love, honor, and shame are rejected as mere sentiments?

Dulce et decorum *is the first part of a line from the Latin poet Horace, which is translated: "It is sweet and seemly to die for one's country." This is the type of traditional value that many cultures have taken for granted, but which Lewis's hypothetical innovator sees as inadequate in itself. Lewis sets out to show that this value can't be understood apart from certain underlying sentiments.*

At this point, the "Innovator" would have to ask on what grounds refusing to sacrifice oneself for others is more or less rational than agreeing to do so, or vice versa. If the argument is based solely on fact, then no practical conclusion may be drawn. In other words, Lewis argues, it isn't possible to move from "*This will preserve society*" to "*do this*" except by means of the belief that "*society ought to be preserved*." The likely result is that the Innovator will give up his quest for a "rational" basis and hunt for a different "basic" value instead.

In this section, Lewis seeks to show that a belief like Dulce et decorum *cannot be established on a strictly rational basis. He argues that there is no basis for concluding that it is rational either to die or not to die for others. If one concludes that dying for society will help to preserve it, then one must likewise prove that society is worthy of preserving. If he cannot, then he cannot exhort someone either to die or not to die for the sake of others.*

The Innovator will probably decide that Instinct is the answer—particularly the desire to preserve society and the human species. There is no instinctive desire to, say, keep promises, which is why this and other values of the Tao can be swept away when they seem to be in conflict with the preservation of the species. This is also why older sexual taboos have come to be disregarded—contraceptives are more widely accepted now, for example.

If rationality fails the Innovator, the Innovator will next turn to instinct as a value more basic than sentiment. If the Innovator believes that there is an instinct to preserve the species, then he will be willing to disregard values that are not instinctual, like promise-keeping. He will also be willing to reject traditional sexual values that can be shown to have no instinctual basis.

In reality, though, the Innovator hasn't gotten anywhere, Lewis argues. For one thing, it seems that "Instinct" is being used in the sense of a widely felt, spontaneous impulse. But if it's the case that such impulses must be obeyed, then why must people be pressured to do so? Or if it's being argued that obeying instinct makes people happy—how does that help in the matter of dying for one's country, which, by definition, involves death and the cutting off of all satisfactions?

Lewis argues that the hypothetical Innovator must prove *why Instinct should be obeyed. Emotional satisfaction alone clearly isn't an adequate justification, since a person who dies for their country won't get any satisfaction at all from doing so—because they'll be dead.*

So why obey instinct, according to the Innovator? Again, it seems impossible to get from "I have an impulse to do something" to "I ought to obey said instinct." Ultimately, too, there are a variety of instincts, which sometimes seem to be at war with one another. Why should an instinct to preserve the species be elevated above other instincts, like self-preservation or the indulgence of sexual appetite? What is the basis for judgment? Inevitably, a value judgment must be imposed on the instinct from something exterior to it.

People are filled with competing instincts. So in order to demonstrate that one instinct is more worthy to be obeyed than another, one must have some means of judging between them. In this way Lewis builds his argument that mere instinct is not a better way of getting "beneath" the Tao than mere rationality is.

Finally, Lewis doubts whether there really is a commonly observable instinct for the preservation of the species. People naturally have an instinct to preserve their own offspring; those who believe in the Tao would say this is how people *ought* to feel, but those who take instinct as their basic value do not have the option of saying that. Ultimately, the Innovator won't find a firm basis either in factual propositions or in instinct. The principles he seeks can only be found in the Tao.

Ultimately, the so-called instinct to preserve the species is too abstract for Lewis. He argues that traditional values have rightfully located instinct in loyalty to kin, which is something for which the Innovator can give no explanation.

In the end, when the Innovator tries to attack the Tao, he can only do so by using principles that are themselves derived from the Tao. Once the Tao is rejected, the Innovator cannot find any principles that will help him support the claim that it's right for someone to die for his country. He can only try to pick and choose bits that he deems useful, while lacking any governing basis for those choices. For instance, the Tao has always transmitted belief in duties to both children and parents. On what basis can one be favored over the other?

Whenever the Innovator tries to undermine the Tao, Lewis argues, he can't find an adequate weapon in rationality, instinct, or anything else. There is, finally, nothing "beneath"—that is, more essential than—the Tao that enables him to defend a principle like Dulce et decorum. *Lewis is trying to prove that the Tao is ultimately inescapable; it's impossible to make sense of anything without embracing it in full.*

Since Lewis can find no answer to these questions, he draws the following conclusions. The Tao (which others might call Traditional Morality or Natural Law) isn't just one among a series of value systems. It is, rather, the source of all value systems. It must be accepted or rejected as a whole. There will never be a new such system. Anything that purports to be a new one is really just bits and pieces "wrenched from their context […] and then swollen to madness in their isolation." A new ideology is just the rebellion of branches against the tree.

The Tao—or whatever term one might want to use—is a set of objective values, Lewis argues. No matter how an Innovator searches, he will not find an alternate value system, much less a superior one. More likely, he will just create a distortion of some aspect of the Tao, since what he's really doing is taking certain pieces out of context and losing their meaning in the process.

Lewis concedes that, when lumping together Western and Eastern traditional moralities in this way, there will inevitably be contradictions. In light of that, it will be necessary at times to adopt a critical attitude. But Lewis holds that there are different types of criticism: criticism from without and from within. Criticism from *within* is able to admit the difference between "a moral advance and a mere innovation." For instance, the Christian "Do unto others" can be seen as an advance on the Confucian "Do not do to others…" A true advance can only occur when one already accepts the older maxim as valid. Only those who accept the Tao and find it intelligible, according to Lewis, are in a position to modify it. In other words, the burden of proof never rests on the Tao itself, and only one who understands and operates within it can be a "legitimate reformer."

Lewis does not argue that the Tao is unchangeable. But there are proper and improper ways of going about modifying the Tao. When he notes that a Christian teaching is based on an older Confucian one, he's arguing that only someone who accepts the older Confucian teaching as valid is in a position to develop the later, more positive Christian position as a superior alternative. Lewis is not trying to offer a historical genealogy of ethical teachings, but rather to argue that there is a difference between internal development and tearing something down from the outside.

Lewis maintains that although he is a Theist and a Christian, he is not trying to make a defense of Theism. He simply wants to argue that the values of the Tao must be accepted as having absolute validity, and that any attempt to uncover more basic, "realistic" values cannot succeed. He is not concerned with the supernatural origins of the Tao, or the absence thereof.

Lewis is not trying to offer a religious apologetic for the Tao, or even to claim that it cannot be altered from within, but rather to show that there is no way of stepping outside of this body of traditional teachings. It doesn't matter where it comes from, he says; the important thing is that it's valid.

Lewis acknowledges that "the modern mind" has a hard time assenting to the Tao. In fact, modern people might assume that the Tao is one more aspect of nature that humans now have the power to control. Why not consider the Tao as a mere "psychological survival" and move beyond it in order to become masters of our own destiny? Lewis acknowledges that this rejection of the concept of value is a more intellectually respectable position than the position of those who hope to dig up some more basic value underneath the Tao. But he will need another lecture to consider it.

Now that he has argued for the existence and importance of objective value as expressed in the Tao, Lewis considers the Tao's tenuous position within contemporary society. To the modern person, there's no apparent reason why the Tao with its objective values should not be superseded, as human beings have come to control so many aspects of nature. He will explore this question in the next lecture.

CHAPTER 3: THE ABOLITION OF MAN

When people talk about "the progress of applied science," they often refer to it as "Man's Conquest of Nature." In this lecture, Lewis explores in what sense humanity can be said to hold power over Nature. He begins by considering three examples: "the aeroplane, the wireless, and the contraceptive." In reality, each of these things is something held by certain people and sold or withheld for use by others. And in the case of the first two—the plane or the radio—human beings could be said to be the subject as much as the possessor of these technologies. One can, after all, be subject to both bombs (from warplanes) and propaganda (over the airwaves).

Lewis questions his society's assumptions about humanity's position relative to nature. In the midst of the 20th century's rapid technological progress, people often assume that there is no stopping such progress. But if one looks more closely at the "power" involved, it is not an equally distributed power, or an unqualifiedly good one. This will become the basis for Lewis's argument that so-called "power over nature" can take a decidedly sinister turn.

In the matter of contraceptives, there's a sense in which all future generations are subjects of a power already being wielded by the current generation. In such a case, humans' power over nature is simply "a power exercised by some men over other men with Nature as its instrument."

Lewis is not necessarily attacking contraception outright. His point, rather, is that there is power involved here, too—one generation is able to determine the existence of future ones. This point parallels the examples of the radio and the airplane, both of which give some groups of people power over others.

Lewis does not wish to argue that increased moral virtue would cure certain abuses, but to consider what people's "power over nature" essentially is. Although we are adept at, for instance, recognizing the exercise of power by majorities over minorities, we don't sufficiently recognize Time as a dimension in which such exercise of power occurs. But it is true that each generation exercises power over its successors, and that later generations try to resist or modify what has gone before. This complicates the common assumption that society is steadily progressing away from tradition.

Lewis argues against a simplistic view of either progress or decline by pointing out that one generation's actions affect another's, whether for good or ill. This contributes to his argument that "power over nature" is not a straightforward thing; in a practical sense, it's often more like some humans having power over others.

If a generation finally attains the power to manipulate future generations into exactly what it desires, then the next generation will inevitably be weaker, even though it will have inherited powerful tools from its predecessors. And the longer this goes on—the closer the human race moves toward extinction—the fewer people there will be. So it is nonsense to speak of the human race growing steadily stronger.

Lewis imagines a world in which science is used in order to impact the number and characteristics of future generations. Not only is this an example of power being exercised by the many over the few, but it further undermines the narrative of inevitable forward progress.

It makes no sense, then, to really speak of humans having power over nature. According to modern scientific planners, it always ends up meaning "the rule of a few hundreds of men over billions upon billions of men."In other words, any advance *by* humanity inevitably involves power *over* other human beings. The final stage will come when, by means of things like eugenics and propaganda, humanity will have obtained full control over itself. But when humanity has won the victory of making itself whatever it desires, what has it really won?

Lewis essentially argues that the phrase "power over nature" is a misnomer; it is really talking about the rule of a small number of powerful people over those with less power. When such power reaches its summit, it just means that a small number of human beings will have succeeded in shaping the rest in a way that the few have deemed desirable.

The power of humanity to shape itself at will inevitably includes the power to modify others at will, too. While this has always been true to some degree, nowadays the technological and political power to do so have dramatically increased. In addition, in the past the attempts to mold humanity were guided by the Tao; the mold, in other words, was pre-cut. If values are just natural phenomena, however, then the Tao as a motive for education will be missing. Any value judgments will be produced by education, but will not be its foundation. When human nature has been conquered, things like conscience, for example, are at the discretion of society's conditioners. Conditioners will impose an artificial Tao.

In Lewis's view, today the small group of "conditioners"—those with power to shape other people at will—have unprecedented resources to impose upon nature and hence on other people. They are also unburdened by the Tao's restraining influences. Whereas past generations would have had the goal of producing human beings according to the Tao's teachings, today there is no guiding motive for those who shape future generations, which makes the power some exercise over others all the more troubling.

At first, the "conditioners" might retain some sense of the Tao as something they have a duty to preserve. It's now up to them to decide if they wish to instill this same sense of "duty" in other people. And in time, they will view the Tao as one more natural process over which they can exert control—a tool, not an innate motive.

The Tao, in Lewis's view, won't die out immediately. Its influence will linger long after its objective status has been abandoned, but the difference will be that society's conditioners will use it to promote their desired ends, instead of being shaped by it.

Lewis claims he is not assuming that the conditioners would be "bad men." In a certain sense, they aren't really "men" at all. This is because they have sacrificed the sense of being part of traditional humanity in order to decide for themselves what "humanity" really is. By "[s]tepping outside the Tao, they have stepped into the void," and their final conquest over nature proves to be, in fact, "the abolition of man."

Lewis's point isn't that the "conditioners" of society are morally compromised. It's that such people have ventured outside of traditionally recognized categories of what's "human," because they're trying to shape humanity from the outside instead of living within it. Finally the meaning of the "conquest over nature" becomes clear—it's the elimination of humanity, at least as humanity has long known itself.

Without the Tao, the only motive that remains to the conditioners is their emotional sense. When there is no longer any objective sense of "It is good," all that remains is "I want." This means that the conditioners are motivated only by their own pleasure. When there are no objective measures of value, then conditioners cannot value one emotional impulse over another, except by the impulses' relative strength.

The Tao serves to regulate people's desires, according to Lewis. With the Tao abandoned, there is no stable basis for people's motives. Everything comes down to the strength of someone's felt impulses—which renders everyone subject to the strongest whims of the people with the most power.

While we can't assume that the rejection of the Tao would strip away all "benevolent" impulses, Lewis is inclined to believe that history does not show many examples of people who stepped outside of traditional moral structures and then used their power benevolently. He thinks it is more likely that the "Conditioners will hate the conditioned," because the conditioned at least can maintain a pretense of meaning in their lives. The conditioners will lack any basis for promoting good impulses in the conditioned, but will rely instead on irrational behaviors.

Again, the rejection of the Tao isn't the same thing as the elimination of all of humanity's positive aspects, but Lewis believes that such benevolence won't survive alongside the unchecked exertion of power. Without a stable limiting influence—namely, the Tao—the situation is ripe for oppression of the many by the few.

So when Man achieves victory over Nature, it really means that most people are subjected to the irrational impulses of a very few. This means that, ultimately, "Man's conquest of Nature turns out, in the moment of its consummation, to be Nature's conquest of Man." In other words, when we thought we were subduing nature, we were actually being led by nature.

Lewis restates the argument he has been driving toward—that, paradoxically, the quest for so-called domination of nature turns out to be a reversion to natural impulse unrestrained by rational impulse.

It turns out, then, that every conquest over Nature actually strengthens Nature's reign. To a certain extent, this process might produce great gains. But when it reaches the point that human beings, too, are reduced to mere Nature, then the same "being who stood to gain" has become "the being who has been sacrificed."

Domination over certain aspects of nature—such as power over deadly disease—is desirable. But Lewis's point is that, without the Tao, this process progresses too far, destroying those things that have traditionally been considered intrinsically human—in particular, rational thought and behavior, as guided by the Tao.

This process, then, is trying to have it both ways. Lewis says that this is impossible—we must either be rational spirits which are subject to the Tao, or we are raw material to be manipulated at will by select masters who are subject only to their natural impulses. The Tao alone—belief in objective value—can save us from "a rule which is not tyranny or an obedience which is not slavery."

For Lewis, there are only two choices, both of which rest on humanity's relationship to the Tao. He argues that any choice that isn't acceptance of the Tao as a whole inevitably tends toward dehumanization and totalitarianism, since the alternative is allowing certain powerful people to dominate everyone else in whatever way they want.

While some will accuse Lewis of hereby making an attack on Science, Lewis denies this. In fact, he even believes that a cure might be found in Science. He argues that Science and Magic actually arose at the same time, born of the same impulse during the 16th and 17th centuries. What was this impulse? Both science and magic sought to "subdue reality to the wishes of men," by means of various applied techniques. In this way, both the scientist (like Bacon) and the magician (like Faustus) have the same goal. Though the founders of modern science certainly had certain good motives, it might be that the love of power has too often exceeded the love of knowledge for its own sake.

Lewis categorizes science and magic—both early modern phenomena that emerged as part of humanity's quest to subdue nature—as essentially the same kind of thing. Bacon refers to Francis Bacon, an English philosopher who developed the scientific method; Faustus refers to Marlowe's play, Doctor Faustus, in which Faustus masters the arts of magic, ultimately at the price of his soul. While science won out over magic and has had many positive outcomes, Lewis notes here that this good, though real, constantly competes with the desire for mastery and power.

Lewis questions whether a better approach to natural philosophy—one that explains without explaining *away*—is possible. Such a science would need to "conquer Nature without being at the same time conquered by her and buy knowledge at a lower cost than that of life." Perhaps analytical understanding must always be a "basilisk" that only sees by killing.

Lewis returns to the point that perhaps science contains within itself a remedy for the problems he has diagnosed; however, he does not articulate possible remedies here. A basilisk is a mythological snake-like creature which kills what it sees. For Lewis the basilisk is symbolic of a scientific approach that lethally dissects what it tries to understand (such as human nature).

Lewis argues that this kind of "seeing" comes at too heavy a price. The whole point of seeing *through* something, after all, is to see *something* through it. One looks through a window in order to see the street or garden beyond. Similarly, it makes no sense to try to see through first principles. A world in which everything is transparent is an invisible world; thus, seeing through everything is the same thing as not seeing at all.

Lewis concludes his lecture series by restating the importance of objective first principles, claiming that trying to get beyond these principles (namely, the Tao) results in the destruction of society as we know it. When we think we are seeing through foundational principles, we are actually losing our ability to see wisely at all.

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