

An Introduction to and Themes from C. S. Lewis's  
*The Abolition of Man*

Introduction to the Book:

1. Historical Background to *The Abolition of Man*

The book originated during WWII when Lewis was asked by the University of Durham to present the Riddell Memorial Lectures on February 24-26, 1943. They were actually given, not in the city of Durham, but further north in the village of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne in the evening of these three days. The lectures were published in a book later that same year by Oxford University Press.

2. The Theme of *The Abolition of Man*

One of the best defenses of the natural law tradition in the 20th century. Natural law is the notion that there is an innate or native understanding of right and wrong that is the possession of every human being. St. Paul explains the idea in Romans 2: 14-16.

Rom. 2:14 For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, Rom. 2:15 in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, Rom. 2:16 on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.

Lewis summarizes the natural law tradition, "written on the heart" in all its Judeo-Christian, Greco-Roman glory, and thus he stands in the tradition of the giants of Western civilization such as Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, and Thomas Aquinas. He also draws upon the wisdom of the East, including Confucius and the sages of Hinduism, and even appropriates the Chinese term TAO as his symbol for the natural law tradition.

Because he believed that the Western world was in the process of rejecting this natural law tradition of an objective right and wrong, and because he saw this rejection being taught in the school systems of the day, and because he believed that any society that accepted such a system of education that rejected the natural law tradition was doomed to destruction, he penned this defense of the natural law tradition as an attempt to salvage Western Civilization.

For him the turning point was the Enlightenment, when the West went through its most catastrophic cultural transition, passing through what Lewis has referred to aptly as "the un-christening of Europe," leading to the loss of the "Old European" or "Old Western Culture," and to the advent of a "post-Christian" age.<sup>1</sup>

3. The Structure of *The Abolition of Man*

Chapter 1: Men Without Chests

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<sup>1</sup> C. S. Lewis, "De Descriptione Temporum," in *Selected Literary Essays*, ed. Walter  
Walter (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1969), 4-5, 12.

Debunks the modern attempt to debunk objective virtues and the cultivation of appropriate sentiments to obey them. The purpose of education was to inculcate objective virtues in people by linking them with the proper emotions. Reinforcing virtue with emotion produced sentiments or habits in people, supplying them with chests to protect them from savagery. However, by debunking all objective virtues and the emotions ordinate to them, educators were producing men without chests, unable to resist their base appetites. This situation makes civilization unsustainable, according to Lewis. "We make men without chests and yet expect of them virtue and enterprise. We castrate, and bid the gelding be fruitful."

The Green Book (it had a green cover!) = *The Control of Language* (1940) by Alex King and Martin Kelty (= Gaius and Titus). Orbilius = *The Reading and Writing of English* (1936) by E. G. Biaggini.

Lewis advocates the existence of an objective moral code that transcends time and culture. An honest study of different cultures shows indicates the existence of a universal moral code which Lewis refers to as the TAO. In the appendix to the book, he cites support for the existence of this TAO.

#### Chapter 2: "The Way"

Those who deny the validity of moral judgments are self contradictory, for they cannot or escape making moral judgments themselves. The only way to avoid this is by denying objective moral judgments all together and attempt to create our own as an act of the will to power! So Nietzsche, but the cure is worse than the disease!

#### Chapter 3: "The Abolition of Man"

The potential for tyranny in a world where the elites no longer believe in objective truth. Everything is reduced to a struggle for power. There is no constraint on what social and political and cultural elites might do to control and reshape society. The question is not what is right or wrong, but which group has the most power to impose its will on the whole. It is the well spring of tyranny.

### **C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man***

#### **Central Themes in Chapter One:**

#### **"Men Without Chests"**

**Theme #1: Miseducation.** The problems of *The Green Book* and *Orbilius* is that school children do not learn their lessons in literature that these books are intended to teach ("Another little portion of the human heritage has been quietly taken from them before they were old enough to understand," 25). Instead they are taught lessons in philosophy in which ethics, theology, and politics are all at stake. At the same time, the children have their souls cut out. How so?

1. By virtue of instruction in "emotivism," or the view that all sentences expressing values ("The waterfall is sublime") are about the emotional state of the speaker, and not about anything objective in the waterfall (or anything else for that matter).
2. That all such statements are unimportant, that all values are subjective, relative, and trivial ("All emotions aroused by local associations are n themselves contrary to reason and contemptible," 23).

3. These are not theories put directly into the child's mind, but are assumptions which ten years later, their origin forgotten and their presence unconscious, will condition him to take one side in a controversy which he has never recognized as a controversy at all.

4. These teachers have cut out the soul of the school child, longer before he is old enough to choose the possibility of having certain experiences which thinkers of more authority than they (Gaius and Titius) have held to be generous, fruitful, and humane.

**Theme #2: Uncultivated souls.** While it is hard to say exactly what Gaius and Titius sought as their purpose, it may be that they intentionally sought to produce what Lewis calls "trousered apes" and "urban blockheads." That is, people who have been shorn clean of traditional values and noble sentiments, giving them a new set of sentiments and values altogether.

**Theme #3: Rationale.** Lewis gives three reasons why he thinks that Gaius and Titius do what they do in their book. One, literary criticism is hard, and it's easier to do what they did do, namely debunk traditional values and ordinate emotion. Two, they falsely think young people are given to emotional excess, and thus need to be fortified against emotion by reason. Three, they reject the doctrine of objective moral value, but this is contrary to the Western and, indeed, worldwide embrace of such a doctrine, a doctrine Lewis calls by the Chinese name, TAO.

Regarding the second of the above three points, Lewis makes two points in response. First, most students suffer from a lack of emotion ("cold vulgarity"), not an excess. Two, the best cure for false emotions is to inculcate proper ones. Hence, "THE TASK OF THE MODERN EDUCATOR IS NOT TO CUT DOWN JUNGLES (of false emotions and sentimentality), BUT TO IRRIGATE DESERTS (water proper sentiments and emotions).

**Theme #4: Objective moral values.** Lewis offers a survey of representatives from Western and world sources who advocate the objective, universal, timeless principles and truths, or what Lewis calls the TAO (Chinese for "the way"). His examples are the following:

Shelley's Aeolian Harp

Traherne's notion of prizing things according to their value

St. Augustine's *ordo amoris*

Aristotle's educational dictum that the aim of education in to make the pupil love what he ought.

Plato's educating future guardians and philosopher-kings to have the right responses based on music and poetic education.

Hinduism's Rta

Chinese Tao

Jewish law

"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." 31

"And because our approvals and disapprovals are thus recognitions of objective value or responses to objective order, therefore emotional states can be in harmony with reason, or out of harmony with reason. . . . No emotion is, in itself, a judgment; in that sense all emotions and sentiments are alogical. But they 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." 31

**Theme #5: Education inside or outside the Tao.** As Lewis points out, it makes all the difference in the world if education proceeds inside or outside the Tao. The difference is between "initiation" into the universal human heritage of objective values or "conditioning" to a new, subjective set of practical values by which people are manipulated pawns.

For those within, the task is to train in the student the responses which are right, regardless of how many don't make such responses, and in learning to make the right responses their true humanity consists. "It is but old birds (teachers) teaching young birds (students) how to fly." It means transmitting humanity, humanhood, to young men and women.

For those outside, all sentiments and affections are non-rational, and so they must either be removed (cut down the jungle), or they must be given new sentiments which have nothing to do with truth, objectivity, or justness. But here teaching is a form of manipulation, just as a poultry keeper deals with young birds for the market.

Example of a Roman father teaching his son that it is a sweet and seemly thing to die for his country. Lewis evaluates this inside and outside the Tao.

**Theme #6: Trained emotions.** Without the aid of trained emotions, the intellect or mind which knows what to do is powerless against the animal organism. While the mind knows right and wrong almost instinctively, if there is not a corresponding desire in the heart, the right affections, the right love or disposition to DO what is right, then no amount of good reasoning will lead to doing the right thing.

It is better (that is, less risky) to play cards with a "gentleman" who **feels** there are some things that a "gentleman" simply does not do, than to play with a philosopher trained by Gaius and Titius!

The head (which knows right and wrong) rules the belly (animal appetites) through the chest (ordinate emotions and just affections)! That is, only as the chest, the seat of emotions and sentiments, is rightly trained to respond in accordance with objective moral values, will it be able to control the baser appetites of the belly.

**Theme #7: Men without chests.** The chest, that is, the human heart, is the "liaison" officer between cerebral, thinking man and visceral, sensate man. Only as the "chest" or "heart" is trained in the proper sentiments, that is, its desert is properly irrigated, will it be able to control the lower desires. But modern education, Gaius and Titius and company are producing "men without chests," that is, without the formation of the proper middle element by which a person is a person, a man a man or a woman a woman. It is the defect of fertile and generous emotion. It is what Gaius and Titius themselves lack. They are themselves men without chests.

**Theme #8: Moral irony.** Given the moral collapse of our culture, we clamour for the qualities that we make it impossible to obtain. We cry out in a post-Columbine culture for values, and yet we are destroying the foundations by which such values could be established.

"We remove the organ and demand the function." "We castrate and bid the geldings be fruitful."

Summary: Gaius and Titius debunk ordinate emotions and proper sentiments based on objective values and thereby destroy humanity, and in the process set the culture on the road to ethical, religious, and political disaster where the poison of subjectivism reigns.

**C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man***  
**Central Themes in Chapter Two:**  
**The Way**

**Theme #1: Subjective destruction of society.** An education in moral subjectivism will eventually destroy the society which accepts it. Lewis is clear, however, that its pragmatic failure

is no proof of its falsehood. Indeed, true doctrines, if applied, may lead to our death. For example: "Take up your cross, and follow Me!" Pragmatism is no test for truth. In this lecture, Lewis wants to point out the THEORETICAL difficulties in the philosophy of Gaius and Titius, that is, why it is wrong rationally.

**Theme #2: Serious contradictions in Gaius and Titius philosophy.** While Gaius and Titius espouse moral subjectivism, they simultaneously promote certain objective values. While they overtly promote relativism, they subtly embrace their own version of absolutism. Their philosophy is "self-defeating" or "self-referentially incoherent" as philosophers say. What are the explicit contradictions?

They write to produce certain states of mind in young people (conditioning them) because they think that such states of mind will be the means to a better society than the one we have now.

The Green Book has a clear, specific end that it is seeking to promote, and an end that has absolute value in the authors' eyes. Even if they call their end by a euphemism such as "necessary," "progressive," or "efficient," they still have a certain, indisputable goal for their work. They believe it to be "good for its own sake," and in some way think it "valid or correct." They hold to a complete system of values with an "uncritical dogmatism," especially a system of values prominent between WWI and WWII. There is no subjectivism here!

Their skepticism is only a tool they use to attack traditional morality or the Tao, that is the beliefs of other people. They are not skeptical about their own viewpoints! They debunk other peoples' values, but certainly not their own.

**Theme #3: The failure of UTILITARIANISM as a grounds for the new morality (and the is/ought fallacy).** If the traditional, absolute morality of the TAO, which Lewis equates with genuine Reason, is rejected, what then can serve as the basis for a new set of values? Lewis uses the example of *dulce et decorem*, a phrase from the *Odes* of Horace that meant that it is a sweet and becoming to die for one's country. He also invokes Jesus's phrase from John that greater love has no man than that he lay down his life for his friend. If these values are not real, true, absolute, objective, and rational, then on what basis might they be promoted? Why die for your country or your friend if it is not, indeed, a right and good and truly noble thing to do? Lewis says that two platforms are possible, but neither succeed:

Utilitarianism: do it because it works! It saves society! Some must die for the benefit of others. It helps, it works. But just because this helps or works is no basis for ME laying down MY life for country or friend! If it is not a right thing to do, why should I do it and not someone else? Let others sacrifice for me rather than me for others!

Is/ought fallacy: If this martyrdom is practiced, and it is by some, then it will work and it will preserve society. Therefore it ought to be done. But Lewis says that just because something helps or works or is done is no rational justification or basis that it ought to be done, must be done, has to be done. Something truly absolute like "society ought to be preserved" as a rational foundation for action is necessary to move people to such self-sacrifice, not just that it works and helps.

Hence, if Gaius and Titius proposal lacks a solid foundation in Reason, then what alternative foundation is left to them to establish their new program of ethics. Lewis says it must be the doctrine of instinct.

**Theme #4: The failure of INSTINCT as a grounds for the new morality.** If the new morality cannot be grounded in reason, for it is the basis of the old morality, and if utilitarianism fails as a

basis as well, then what other option remains? Lewis proposes INSTINCT as the last resort: following an unreflective or spontaneous impulse widely felt by members of a specie as the basis for values. But Lewis offers several critiques of instinct as a basis for values:

1. If instinct is a natural, inescapable impulse that is naturally obeyed, why write books like the Green Book exhorting us to obey instinct? Why praise those who have submitted to that which they cannot avoid?
2. To assert that if people obey instinct, they will be happy and satisfied. But in the case of dying for country or friends as instinctual, such happiness and satisfaction is achieved only when we are dead, and hence is no satisfaction or happiness at all.
3. If instinct OUGHT to be obeyed, why? What is the basis for obeying instinct? Another instinct? Why obey that instinct? There is no final foundation for obeying instinct.
4. Some instincts ought to be resisted, not obeyed. In fact, there are many instincts, like people, telling us what to do. They are at war. How do we choose which ones to obey and not obey? There is a need for a criterion or a basis for determining which instincts to obey and which not to obey. Something outside instinct is needed in order to determine which instincts to obey and which to suppress.
5. Finally, regarding the test case of dying for country or friends, there seems to be no such instinct at all. Lewis has no such impulse. Most only have an instinct or impulse to sacrifice for one's own children or grandchildren, not posterity and not for future generations. You need another law outside of instinct to encourage us to such action.
6. CONCLUSION: Neither utilitarianism or instinct is an adequate basis for the new morality! But it is found already in the TAO itself.

**Theme #5: The unavoidable supremacy of the TAO as the basis for all moral values.** What the Innovator is looking for as a justification for his/her new morality is already found in the TAO itself. It is the foundational, axiomatic, self-evident set of first principles for all morality, not the outcome of moral arguments but the basis for all moral arguments. Also:

Any attack on the Tao presupposes the Tao. There is no way to remove oneself from the Tao or to select certain things from it and reject the rest. If accept parts, must accept whole; if reject parts, must reject the whole, but this cannot be done!

The Tao therefore is the basis of all value systems. If it is rejected, all value is rejected. If any value is retained, it is retained. No new value system can be erected except on the basis of the Tao. All such efforts will merely be fragments from the Tao itself. Rebellion against the Tao is a rebellion of the branches against the tree or its trunk (see epigram at the beginning of this chapter). There are no new primary colors, or a new sun or sky in which it may move.

**Theme #6: Developments within the Tao.** Can human understanding of the Tao be improved? Or is it a moral code set in stone? Can it be obeyed? Aren't the various articulations of it East and West, Christian and non-Christian contradictory? Lewis thinks that our understanding of the Tao can be improved, requiring criticism, removal of contradictions, and real development in perception. But there are two ways to go about this: from without and from within the Tao:

It is parallel to the way a theoretician and poet treat language. The former as detached critic, surgically if you will, and the latter as a genuine lover, in a kind of organic way.

There are genuine advances within the Tao illustrated in Jesus' notion of the golden rule (a positive formulation) over Confucius' (a negative formulation). On the other hand, Nietzsche's ethic is an innovation, that is, an attempt at something totally new where traditional morality is rejected along with the foundation for any value whatsoever. A genuine advance is like one who loves fresh vegetables and decides to grow his own rather than purchase them at the store. An innovation would mean rejecting vegetables totally and trying to eat bricks and centipedes.

Only those sympathetic to the Tao, who love it and seek to obey it, can really make an advance within it according to its genuine spirit and direction (so Confucius, Aristotle, and the Bible in John 7: 49; 11: 51).

"An open mind, in questions that are not ultimate, is useful. But an open mind about ultimate foundations either of Theoretical or of Practical Reason is idiocy!"

Lewis admits that the matter of making advances within the Tao are difficult, but the one thing that cannot be done is to reject it in hopes of making an advance on it: "You must not hold a pistol to the head of the Tao" and expect to have any basis for morality!

A disclaimer: Lewis admits he is a Christian theist, but also is not attempting an argument for theism, Christian or otherwise here. Rather, he is seeking to show that if humankind is to have any values at all, then we must accept the validity of the Tao. Whether or not it must have a theological basis is another topic for another day.

**Theme #7: Conquest of the Tao.** But a critic might say: if the Tao is simply a part of nature, why not conquer it like we have all other parts of nature? Science has conquered everything else, and can conquer this most recalcitrant aspect of nature as well! Humankind can do what it pleases with nothing to please except itself. Let us remake life and let us remake man according to our own specifications. Let us master the environment and now ourselves and choose our own teleology or purpose. But what will happen when we reject values all together? What will our future be? See the next lecture!

### **C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* Central Themes in Chapter Three: The Abolition of Man**

**Theme #1: Man's conquest of nature.** Or as a friend of CSL put it: "Man has nature whacked" (even though ironically the man who said this was dying of tuberculosis: mortality has not been whacked). While appreciating the accomplishments of modern science and without disparaging it, CSL is still very concerned to understand what this agenda to conquer nature really means. He wants to relate it to the overall theme of the book: the moral law, the Tao. Hence his goal in this chapter is to clarify EXACTLY what all is implied, what is the true moral significance of the idea that man is the possessor of increasing power over nature.

**Theme #2: Man's power over nature is really the power of some people over others using nature as an instrument to wield that power.** CSL offers three examples of how the development of scientific technology in radios, airplanes, and contraceptive devices is really the power of some people over others. We are not powerful ourselves just because we use these conveniences. Why?

First, you first have to be able to PAY for the use of these things. If you don't have the money, you don't have the power these things provide.

“Any or all of these three things I have mentioned can be withheld by some men over other men--by those who sell, or those who allow the sale, or those who owned the sources of production, or those who make the goods.” 66

Second, even if you can pay for them, these things are really more powerful than you: if I pay you to carry me, you have power over me as the one who carries me!

Third, these three forms of technology can be used against you: airplanes bomb, radios propagandize, contraceptives deny existence or produce selective breeding. Hence, man's power over nature is the power of some over others in these three ways.

**Theme #3: The total remaking of humanity by some human beings is what is really meant by the phrase “Man's power over Nature.”** CSL is careful to clarify that what he is talking about is not just the abuse or corruption of science and technology its correction by the application of the moral law. Rather, by looking ahead in time to future generations, it means “the power of earlier generations over later ones.” Thinking in terms of TIME is the key. CSL anticipates “one dominant age,” and a “master generation,” which like all ages and generations, will modify the power of the previous age and generation and the one to follow. He seems especially concerned about that generation equipped with the power of **EUGENICS AND SCIENTIFIC EDUCATION:**

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 preordained who they are to use them. And if, as is almost certain, the [master] age which had thus attained maximum power over posterity were also the age most emancipated from tradition [Tao], it would be engaged in reducing the power of its predecessors almost as drastically as that of its successors [that is, it has power over the past as well as the present]. 68

For CSL, the later or even last generation will be the least powerful since it is the recipient of the ordering forces of those who have gone before it: they “will be of all men most subject to the dead hand of the great planners and conditioners and will themselves exercise least power upon the future.” 69

Here is how CSL sums up the situation in his prophetic best of ONE DOMINANT AGE AND ONE MASTER GENERATION, one set of SCIENTIFIC PLANNERS that will remake humankind:

“The real picture is that of *one dominant age*, let us suppose the hundredth century A.D.- which resists all previous ages most successfully [tosses out the Tao, etc.] and dominates all subsequent ages most irresistibly, and thus is the *real master of the human species*. But even within this master generation (itself an infinitesimal minority of the species) the power will be exercised by a minority smaller still. Man's conquest over Nature, *if the dreams of some scientific planners are realized*, means the rule of a few hundreds of men over billions upon billions of men. There neither is nor can be any simple increase of power on Man's side. Each new power won *by man* is a power *over man* as well. Each advance leaves him weaker as well as stronger. In every victory, besides there being the general who triumphs, he is also the prisoner who follows the triumphal car.” 69

**Theme #4: The final stage in Man's conquest of Nature, that is, of Man's remaking of Man by EUGENICS, is likely 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. The battle will then be won. We shall have “taken the thread of life out of the hand of Clotho” **AND BE HENCEFORTH FREE TO MAKE OUR SPECIES WHATEVER WE WISH IT TO BE.** The battle will, indeed, be won. But who, precisely, will have won it? . . . For the power of Man to make himself what he pleases means, as we have seen, the power of some men to make other men what *they* please. 70

**Theme #5: The twofold uniqueness of this coming generation of power.** While this power has always been exercised by one generation over another in some way shape or form, this particular situation of the coming dominant age, master generation, and set of scientific planners will be unique in two ways:

One, they will be supported by the powers of an *omni-competent state and an irresistible scientific technique*. Being undergirded by this unique political and scientific power, this set of “man-moulders” and “race of conditioners” can make future generations into whatever they want, that is, “cut out all posterity in what shape they please.” 71

Two, they will have rejected the TAO completely and will be totally free to do to humankind whatever they want physiologically and morally: they will even remake the TAO itself into whatever they want:

“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 overarched him [student] and them [teachers] alike. It was but old birds teaching young birds to fly.

“This will be changed. Values are now mere natural phenomena. Judgement 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. The conditioners have been emancipated from all that. It is one more part of Nature which they have conquered. The ultimate springs of human action are no longer, for them, something given. They have surrendered—like electricity: it is the function of the Conditioners to control, not obey them [the ultimate springs of human action]. They know how to produce conscience and decide what kind of conscience they will produce. They themselves are outside, above. For we are assuming the last stage of Man’s struggle with Nature. The final victory has been won. Human nature has been conquered—and, of course, has conquered, in whatever sense those words may now bear.” 71-72.

**Theme #6: The invention of a new, man-made, artificial Tao.** If the conditioners have rejected all values and the basis of all values, where will the new values come from and what will be it or their basis? They have assumed the God-like role of creating the motives for human behavior and of motivating people to behave in a certain way. But what is the basis for their own motivation project? Lewis suggests that for a while at least it will probably be the remnants of the real Tao itself that will be the basis and motivation for creating a new basis and motivation for behavior: they have a “duty” to do the human race “good.” But this cannot and will not last for long because it is objective “duty” and notions of the “good” which they have conquered and rejected.

Will they then decide if the rest of us should be conditioned to embrace duty and the old reactions to it? And yet duty itself cannot decide that since duty is no longer absolute. It is itself up for trial (why be dutiful?) so it cannot be the basis for this judgment. Good is in the same boat. They know how to produce good in us, but which conception of the good.

Good cannot help them decide that since it is up for grabs. A debarred judge cannot decide his own case!

The bottom line: rejecting the Tao leaves no foundation upon which to decide a new one. This is no sham dilemma, that is, factitious which means something "produced artificially rather than by a natural process."

**Theme #7: The loss of genuine humanity and the cultivation of a pseudo-humanity.** It is not that these conditioners in Lewis's estimation are bad men: THEY ARE NOT TRUE MEN AT ALL!

"Why should I suppose they will be such bad men?" But I am not supposing them to be bad men. They are, rather, not men (in the old sense) at all. They are, if you like, men who have sacrificed their own share in traditional humanity in order to devote themselves to the task of deciding what "Humanity" shall henceforth mean. "Good" and "bad," applied to them, are words without content: For it is from them that the content of these words is henceforth to be derived. 73

They choose what they think the rest of us want (food, drink, sex, entertainment, art, science, long life). But who is to say that the rest of us want these things. And even if we did, why should we dutifully make these things available to ourselves and to our posterity? What "duty" compels us to such action? Preservation of the species? They can find no ground to stand on, else they beg the question of the Tao itself.

"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 (the conditioned ones) necessarily unhappy men. They are not men at all: they are artifacts. Man's final conquest has proved to be the abolition of Man! 74

**Theme #8: Radical subjectivism as the basis of morality.** The only motivation left for morality is the conditioners "felt emotion" and "pleasure." But impulses stripped of the Tao for guidance is rarely benevolent or noble. And history shows that few if any rulers stripped of the Tao has used their power benevolently (WWI and WWII is in the background). Chance is the only basis of hope for a good society, that the conditioners will choose benevolence as the basis for it, but there is no guarantee.

"My point is that those who stand outside all judgments of value cannot have any ground for preferring one of their own impulses to another except the emotional strength of that impulse." 75

"Their extreme rationalism, by "seeing through" all "rational" motives leaves them creatures of wholly irrational behavior. If you will not obey the Tao, or else commit suicide, obedience to impulse (and therefore, in the long run, to mere nature) is the only course left open." 76

Sidebar conjecture: The conditioners will hate the conditioned because at least they have the semblance of meaning in their lives whereas the conditioners have none just like eunuch envy real men.

**Theme #9: Man's conquest of Nature turns out to be Nature's conquest of man.** That is, the natural impulses of the conditioners turn out to condition "man," including the manhood of the conditioners themselves. Nature, untrammelled by values, rules the conditioners and, through them, all humanity.

The conditioners appeared to be on top of Nature:

Conditioners

Nature

But as it turns out, Nature actually is on top of the conditioners:

Nature

Conditioners

And the conditioners are on top of the conditioned:

Nature

Conditioners

Conditioned

So everything and everyone is subject to the unrestrained impulses of Nature. Sounds suspiciously like our own society today!

**Theme #10: The “disenchantment” of nature, including man.** Before there was a sense that there was something more to nature than just nature.

- Nature enchanted: quality, consciousness, autonomy, values, final causes.
- Nature disenchanting: spatial, temporal, quantity, objects, bound, no values, efficient causes.

But modern science has reduced everything, including human beings, to mere nature by its analysis and quantification. Bodies and trees are examples, but they can become just a body and just a tree stripped of their genuine qualities. We reduce things to nature to conquer them, but we become a part of that nature, and then ironically we get conquered. People become mere objects, like everything else, for manipulation. Nature and man become the same thing!

“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 (man) and the being who has been sacrificed (nature) are one and the same. 79

“It is in Man’s power to treat himself as a mere ‘natural object’ and his own judgements of value raw material for scientific manipulation to alter at will. ... The real objection is that if man chooses to treat himself as raw material, raw material he will be: not raw material to be manipulated, as he fondly imagined, by himself, but by mere appetite, that is, mere Nature, in the person of the dehumanized Conditioners.” 80

**Theme #11: Either/or dilemma: Naturalism or Taoism!** “Either we are rational spirit obliged for ever to obey the absolute values of the Tao, or else we are mere nature to be kneaded and cut into new shapes for the pleasures of masters who must, by hypothesis, have no motive but their own ‘natural’ impulses. Only the Tao provides a common human law of action which can overarch rulers and ruled alike. A dogmatic belief in objective value is necessary to the very idea of a rule which is not tyranny or an obedience which is not slavery” 80-81.

**Theme #12: This process applies not just to Communists and Nazis but to all societies that have rejected the Tao.** It has just gone on faster in the former settings than in democratic ones, but it is and will happen in democratic societies as well. 81

**Theme #13: This process of the abolition of man shows up in the everyday use of language, especially in redefining terms and in commodification.**

Killed bad men = liquidate unsocial elements.

Virtue = integration  
Diligence = dynamism  
Boys worthy of a commission = potential officer material  
Thrift and temperance and intelligence = sales resistance (commodification) 81-82.

Abortion = pro-choice  
Baby in womb = fetus  
Legal justice = dream team of lawyers  
Moral formation = self help  
Virtues = personal values  
Sin = indiscretion  
Sexual immorality = hooking up.

**Theme #14: Humanization or dehumanization again.**

**Humanization:** "In the Tao itself, as long as we remain within it, we find the concrete reality in which to participate is to be truly human: the real common will and common reason of humanity, alive, and growing like a tree, and branching out, as the situation varies, into ever new beauties and dignities of application. While we speak from within the Tao we can truly speak of Man having power over himself in a sense truly analogous to an individual's self-control.

**Dehumanization:** "But the moment we step outside and regard the Tao as a mere subjective product, this possibility has disappeared. What is now common to all men is a mere abstract universal, an H.C.F., and Man's conquest of himself means simply the rule of the Conditioners over the conditioned human material, the world of post-humanity which, some knowingly and some unknowingly, nearly all men in all nations are at present labouring to produce." 82

**Theme #15: The prostitution of science.** For CSL, instead of pursuing science in its purest sense for the sake of true knowledge and wisdom, it is pursued for the sake of power over nature as if it were a kind of magic.

People will think of Lewis as a Luddite (one who opposes science and technology). Not so he says. Genuine natural philosophers, that is, those who pursue science in a philosophical sense in quest for genuine knowledge and wisdom as a value in and of itself, knows that CSL in defending values defends knowledge at the same time. If you destroy value, you destroy knowledge simultaneously. In fact, CSL thinks that true science might be the source of the real cure for all the problems he has raised (more on this later).

Strange as it may seem, science is more like magic than real science. Magic was less prominent in the middle ages and more prominent at the time of the birth of modern science.

"In the old days, wisdom, not magic or science was the primary concern: "For the wise men of old the cardinal problem had been to conform the soul to reality, and the solution had been knowledge, self-discipline, and virtue. For magic and applied science alike the problem is how to subdue reality to the wishes of men (reality to the soul): the solution is a technique; and both (magic and science) in the practice of this technique, are ready to do things hitherto regarded as disgusting and impious...." 83-4

Faustus (who struck a deal with the devil for gold, girls, and guns = power) and Bacon (the founder of modern science who said knowledge was not valuable for its own sake

but for power) have more in common than we think! Hence, Lewis calls for a new science!

**Theme #16: The call for a new science.** It is science in the context of the Tao, science that pursues genuine knowledge, science that respects nature, science that enters appreciatively and respectfully into the thing known, etc.

**Theme #17: The absolute indispensability of the Tao or the loss of everything.** You can't explain everything away: if you do, you have no ground to stand upon and in doing so you destroy it all. The Tao is the first principle, and without it you have nothing.