

# The Abolition of Man

## Part 1. Men without Chests

The Point: Laments the loss of objective standards of right and wrong, good and bad, and the loss of trained emotions in chests in favor of feelings.

1. What mistake did the writers of *The Green Book* make? To elevate their own feelings above an objective sense of good and bad, to treat a predicate of value as a word descriptive of the speaker's emotions (430).
2. A piece of writing praises horses as the "willing servants" of the early colonists in Australia. How does Orbilius (432) criticize that writing and what does Lewis dislike about that criticism? The critic says that horses cannot possibly be interested in colonial expansion. Lewis says that the pupils do not really learn why the composition is bad.
3. What does Lewis have to say about Aristotle and Plato? Aristotle says that "the aim of education is to make the pupil like and dislike what he ought," and Plato said the same before Aristotle (434).
4. What does Lewis mean by the Tao and how would we describe it in terms of biblical theology? The doctrine of objective value (435), Natural Law, Traditional Morality, First Principles of Practical Reason, First Platitudes (445); the natural knowledge of God and right and wrong.
5. What does Lewis mean by "men without chests"? He says, "The head rules the belly through the chest—the seat, as Alanus tells us, of Magnanimity, of emotions organized by trained habit into stable sentiments" (437). It is an intellect without trained emotions to control the animal organism.

## Part 2. The Way

The Point: To challenge the subjectivism and subjective values of the authors of *The Green Book* by pointing out their self-contradictions.

1. What values do the authors of *The Green Book* espouse? Comfort and security (440, footnote).
2. On what do they base their attempt to debunk traditional values? Perhaps utility, reason, instinct, caring for posterity, or the preservation of the species.
3. How does Lewis challenge them? He asks on what basis their values are any better than those of others. He asks why one instinct is better than another, if there are no traditional values (442).
4. From where does the authority to modify the *Tao* come, according to Lewis? From the *Tao* itself (447).

## Part 3. The Abolition of Man

The Point: To discuss Man's power over Nature and show how man ceases to become man when he has debunked all traditional values. "When all that says 'it is good' has been debunked, what says 'I want' remains" (453).

1. What is the one, major motive of the Conditioners? Their emotions (453).
2. What happens to the idea of duty or good? They fall away (452).
3. Is this an attack on science? No (456).
4. Why does the abolition of man occur? Because men without morals are not men at all (453). "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" (453).
5. What does Lewis say of the relationship between science and magic? They were twins, born of the same impulse, i.e., how to subdue reality to the wishes of men or to have power over the elements (456f.).
6. What does Lewis fear if "they" succeed? Not only the abolition of man, but dehumanization, an all-powerful state, a new educational system, propaganda, lack of values.

## Appendix—Illustrations of the *Tao*