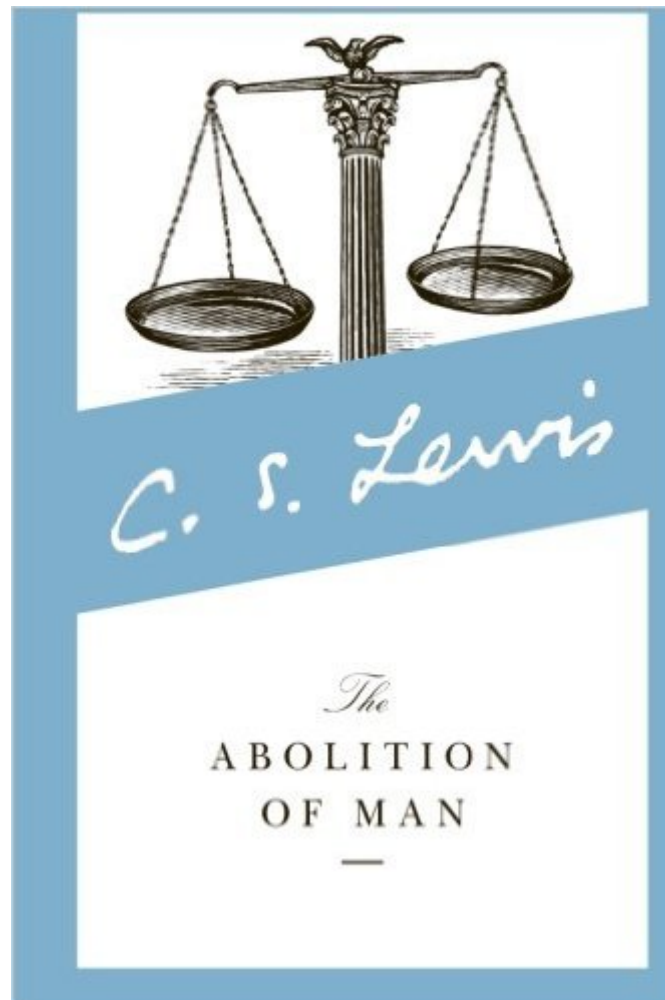


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The Abolition Of Man



Synopsis

Â In the classic *The Abolition of Man*, C.S. Lewis, the most important Christian writer of the 20th century, sets out to persuade his audience of the importance and relevance of universal values such as courage and honor in contemporary society. Both astonishing and prophetic, *The Abolition of Man* is one of the most debated of Lewisâ€™s extraordinary works. National Review chose it as number seven on their "100 Best Nonfiction Books of the Twentieth Century."

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Customer Reviews

. . . but written when Rorty was still in diapers. This is by far the most prophetic, and the most disturbing, of Lewis' works. Starting with a deceptively simple observation - that modern (now postmodern) philosophy tends to reduce all statements of value to mere statements of subjective feeling - Lewis goes on to demonstrate the corrosive and ultimately fatal effect of this line of thinking on any civilized culture. Lewis accurately predicts the parallel development of two trends: (1) the loss of any objective transcendent moral standards; and (2) the ability of a scientific or political elite, through social conditioning and/or genetic manipulation, to affect the thinking of successive generations of the rest of us - the great unwashed. The ascendancy, during the last decade, of moral relativism and the political correctness movement demonstrate how far down these parallel tracks we have come (i.e., Rorty: truth is what gets us what we want; truth is what my peers will let be get by with saying; Christians are "the natural constituency of Hitler"). While he's at it, Lewis refutes the postmodern, and generally unexamined, truism that the historic moral principles of

Western Civilization are fundamentally different from other cultures' norms, and thus are arbitrary and nonbinding. In a lengthy appendix, Lewis shows that the great moral principles are timeless and have been generally accepted by all civilized societies, at all times (until ours). So where will it end? In an ironic conclusion, Lewis predicts that what will be hailed as man's ultimate victory over Nature (such as human cloning?) will actually be Nature's ultimate victory over man. This will occur when we can fully control the kind of people the next generation will be (i.e.

The *Abolition of Man* is a stunningly brilliant masterpiece, prophetic in its insight. Several of the other reviewers here who gave the book a plainly deserved five stars have done a fine job of reviewing its contents. Let me respond briefly to the fundamentalist (rousaswgnr) in Campsville, CA and the leftist bigot in Vancouver, WA. Both fail to scratch the surface of the book for opposite reasons. The reviewer in Campsville (rousaswgnr) apparently thinks that any appeal to right and wrong that doesn't simply quote Bible verses is anti-Christian. Obviously, he would be completely incapable of trying to convince nonChristians that there are universal moral laws that are contravened at our peril -- the very thing Lewis was trying to do. At one point this seeming "fundamentalist" wrote that only scripture teaches right and wrong and things about God. That statement is ironically contrary to scripture itself which says "the heavens declare the glory of God" and that God has revealed His ways and parts of His nature in nature itself and in human consciences (Romans 1). The reviewer rousaswgnr contradicts scripture while trying to defend it. That's a pity. For if he really understood scripture or C. S. Lewis he would know that Lewis is saying what scripture says: God has universal moral laws that He has written into nature that all people can see and that have been generally recognized by major civilizations throughout the ages. Lewis also says it with breath-taking beauty. The leftist from Vancouver, WA is even more vacuous than the fundamentalist. (That's typical.) Like the typical leftist, he imagines that he's brilliant while proving that he doesn't have a clue. He thinks he's clever by quoting Lau Tzu on the meaning of "Tao."

In this short book, CS Lewis takes public education for his subject, though the scope of the work goes well into the philosophical and ethical realms. The master Christian apologist is here arguing against what he sees to be the evils of moral relativism. His essay "Men Without Chests," reminiscent of TS Eliot, speaks of just what would happen if we were to lose all sense of good and bad, and chose instead to attempt to see everything in a purely 'objective' way, without regard for what has been established as right and wrong. The rest of the book develops and plays upon this idea, and Lewis examines the possibilities of a civilization who abandons "The Tao" (the name

Lewis gives to a widely accepted system of moral values) and tries instead to mold its citizens into whatever form its leaders should decide. Of course, this is exactly what Lewis warns again in his Science Fiction novel *That Hideous Strength*, and what is also seen in the book *1984*. To me, the highlight of this book was the appendix. Superbly compiled, it is Lewis's definition of "The Tao," and features a number of moral values (such as one's obligation to society and duty to parents). The best part of this, though, is that Lewis quotes from an enormous range of sources, citing everything from Plato to Beowulf to the Bible to Egyptian writings to show that these are values which have been widely accepted throughout history. This is his basis for calling "The Tao" the ultimate system of moral values, and his justification through widespread acceptance is very good indeed. I believe this is one of CS Lewis's best works, full of inspirational thoughts on morality and warnings against using Science to make man a part of 'Nature' and losing all respect for man as a Divine Creation.

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