



The Abolition of Man

with Dr. Steve Turley

Lesson 4: Moral versus Modern Education

Outline:

Review of Chapter 1, “Men Without Chests”:

- Lewis provides us with two competing views on objective values:
 - **Samuel Taylor Coleridge** recognized that beauty is an objective value in a created, cosmic order. For Lewis, this represents a moral, sapient world.
 - In *The Green Book*, **Gaius and Titius** denied objective value, deemed nature impersonal, and considered beauty and sublimity a matter of personal taste or opinion. This represents a modern, scientific world.
- Chapter 1 ends with Lewis’ warning that denying the *Tao*, or the doctrine of objective values, means amputating oneself from the divine economy of goods in which we order our loves.
- Modern education risks just this, trading educational formation for mere information. Modern education leaves students with a mind/heart dichotomy (all knowledge or all sentiment; all fact or all heart).

Abolition of Man Chapter 2: “The Way” (3:40)

- Education in the spirit of The Green Book:
 - Education in the spirit of The Green Book leads to the destruction of the society that accepts it.
 - **Question:** How can we teach our students that truth is relative, while also expecting our politicians to be honest?
- Problems that arise when the Tao is rejected: (5:50)
 - In Chapter 2, Lewis sets up the fundamental problems facing any system of ethics or values that intellectuals construct outside of natural moral law, or the Tao.
 - **Conundrum:** In a world that rejects the Tao, an alternate value system must be evoked to create a sense of obligation within us, while also acknowledging that no such obligation can exist.
 - Despite Gaius & Titius asserting that objective value is meaningless, they wrote The Green Book for an end or a purpose that they value.
 - **Selective skepticism:** Lewis critiques selective skepticism, which is debunking other values while holding tightly to your own. For example, Gaius & Titius use their skepticism for other value systems, but not their own.
 - As Dr. Turley says, you can sweep away classical value systems, but only with “the broom” of a different system.

Relativizing the relativizer: (8:24)

- In Chapter 2, Lewis practices relativizing the relativizer by scrutinizing modern alternatives to the Tao.
- Lewis critiques 3 modern alternatives to classical values found in the Tao: Utilitarianism, Modern Instinct, and Economic Value.



Utilitarianism: (9:20) *Something has value simply because it is useful.*

- A utilitarian philosophy of values asserts that something is good if it serves a beneficial use. For example, dying for one's country is good because it is useful for other countrymen.
- To criticize utilitarianism, Lewis employs Natural Law Theory, which means that humans are endowed with a moral conscience that recognizes the order of the universe as God created it. A utilitarian could say that it is good to die for one's country because it is useful, but they fail to acknowledge how one knows society ought to be preserved in the first place.
- To understand why a moral society knows that it *ought* to preserve itself, Lewis employs **first principles**, or the self-evident values of the Tao that are accessed by human reason. We access first principles by digging down to the bedrock of our thinking.

Modern Instinct: (15:50) *An evolutionary paradigm that roots ethical obligations or goods in an instinctive urge to preserve our own species.*

- Lewis defines instinct as: "An unreflective or spontaneous impulse widely felt by the members of a given species."
- Dr. Turley points out that if our ethical systems are derived from instinct, more questions arise: Should our ethical systems arise from instinct? Why are we obliged to obey our instincts? And what of conflicting instincts?
- Lewis finds the appeal to instinct ironic. He argues that nothing is more instinctual than the Tao. For example, we instinctually feel that lying, stealing and murder is wrong.
- Here Lewis makes several analogies to logic. The Tao defines and delineates the *oughts* (formal obligations) that are necessary, in the same way that the laws of logic delineate how we think. If you desire a new way of thinking outside the Tao, you are using the Tao. Similarly, if you need a new way of thinking apart from logic, you are using that logic.

Economic Value: (22:30) *If necessary, scruples concerning justice and good faith may be set aside to achieve "the great end," which includes feeding and clothing people.*

- Lewis affirms the mandate to feed and clothes others, but sees this mandate as rooted in the Tao.
- He critiques economic value by pointing out that once we amputate ourselves from objective moral order, we are no longer obliged to do anything.

Conclusions (23:10)

The Tao:

- The Tao, represented by Natural Law Theory or first principles, is the sole source of all value judgments.
- If the Tao is rejected, all values are rejected.
- New systems or ideologies simply take or borrow from the Tao.
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- If a new ideology purports to rebel against the Tao, this happens as branches rebel against the tree.
- Finally, it is helpful to consider the interactions between new ideologies and the Tao, as one would consider laws and justice. Justice is a cosmic principle of order and economy that serves and organizes our society. Laws may change, but our standard for justice never does.