



## The Abolition of Man: A Book Study with Dr. Stephen Turley

Discussion of Lecture 2  
with Dr. Perrin and  
Dr. Turley

### The Medieval Imagination:

#### Review of Lecture 2

- C. S. Lewis' *The Discarded Image* helps students understand medieval literature by providing models of how medieval persons understood their world.
- The Medieval Period contains insights, truth, and a love of the *Tao*—a given creation charged with the glory of God and an embedded moral order.

Dr. Perrin's Discussion Question:

*"We can't go back to the Middle Ages... But can we go back in some ways to recover some of the ideas from the Medieval Period that might infuse, inform, and revivify education today?" (1:15)*

### Medieval Frames of Reference for the Classroom:

#### An Economy of Significance (2:20)

- In an economy of significance, everything is significant, meaningful, and purposeful.
- To discover that meaning and purpose, we first study the object's biological, chemical and physical components; then, we link those components to the eternal, the infinite, and to truth and goodness.
  - Example: We do this by using Biblical imagery to say that sunrises, flowers, and mountaintops are imbued with the glory and light of God.
- **Why should we practice an economy of significance?**
  - Education that teaches students to see the world as an economy of significance pushes students away from *constant self-referencing*.
  - An economy of significance helps students think of how something relates to wider, eternal, and infinite truths, rather than how it relates to themselves.
- **Challenge:** *Train your imagination to think in an economy of significance!*



## A Return to the Middle Ages (5:10)

- When educators consider classical education, they must return to the Middle Ages.
- G. K. Chesterton called the Middle Ages “The Unfinished Temple,” or a shining bridge from one civilization to another.

## The Nature/Culture Dichotomy (6:25)

- We naturally see the world as biological, chemical, and physical processes waiting to be manipulated and given meaning.
  - Dr. Turley offers Japan as a different approach to the nature/culture dichotomy (6:45). Nearly every piece of ground in Tokyo on which a building stands has first been blessed by a Shinto priest. This is an example of *cosmic piety*.
- The example of Japan, as well as the medieval model, calls into question the nature/culture dichotomy. If all we know is to separate nature from culture, and we proceed by scientific rationalism alone, then we are left adding meaning to a meaningless world, rather than discovering the meaning that exists there.
- The medieval imagination resists the nature/culture dichotomy. Medieval persons saw the world as a divine place. The sun was the eye of the universe, not a ball of gas. Everything on earth was infused with divinity.
- **Consider:** *What would our world look like if we thought of everything as related to the divine, eternal, and infinite? How would we teach students? How would we begin and end our days in the classroom?*

## Lewis and the Medieval Order of Things

- C. S. Lewis observed that medieval persons had a penchant for ordering their lives, nature, relationships and the heavens into hierarchies. They sought harmonies and relationships between objects.
- According to classical aesthetics, order and form represented beauty, while deformities represented ugliness.
  - The medieval cathedral is a wonderful example of beauty through order. Every inch of a cathedral had a purpose. A medieval person hoped that, by encountering a cathedral’s control over chaos, they might invite that control and order into their own life.
- Lewis believed that the medieval model, while “an unfinished temple,” as Chesterton says, offered a space for humans to be in harmony with nature and the infinite or divine.