

## Theology III: Moral Theology

Summer Reading Assignment: *The Abolition of Man* by C. S. Lewis

**Instructions:** Students should read the entire text of *The Abolition of Man* by C. S. Lewis. The book is composed of three essays: *Men Without Chests*, *The Way*, and *The Abolition of Man*. Students will find study questions for the first two essays below. These should be answered using complete sentences and, where appropriate, well-organized paragraphs. Direct quotations from the text should be enclosed in quotation marks and properly cited. These study questions are due on the first day of class. While there are not assigned study questions for the third essay, students should read this essay and are encouraged to annotate their texts and read the appendices for greater understanding. The entire text will be discussed in class the first few weeks of school; students should be prepared to take quizzes over what they have read and to engage in Socratic seminars based on their reading of the text.

**Notes for reading:** A judgment of value is a judgment that something is good or bad (moral judgment) or beautiful or ugly (aesthetic judgment). Lewis is concerned in this book with whether these judgments are objective (they are statements about the objects themselves that are made using universal and unchanging truths) or subjective (they are statements that reflect the thoughts, feelings, or opinions of the subject or person making the judgment). If these judgments are objective, then virtues like courage are good in themselves, and always, regardless of my subjective feelings about them. My job as a human being is to try to embody this virtue in order to fulfill my humanity. If these judgments are subjective, then virtues like courage are only good if I choose to recognize them as good or if I “feel” that they are good. My job as a human being is to define good and evil for myself and live however I please. These positions are called moral (or value) objectivism and moral (or value) subjectivism. Moral subjectivism is sometimes considered more broadly as moral relativism. Keep these positions in mind as you read the text.

### Questions for *Men Without Chests*

N.B. A predicate of value is a word that sits in the predicate position of a sentence and denotes value. The predicate of value is underlined in the following examples: God is good. The waterfall is sublime. Helen of Troy is beautiful. Murder is evil.

1. What is *The Green Book* and why does Lewis think it is significant?
2. Is the claim that the waterfall or cataract is sublime a claim about the emotional state of the speaker or a claim about the object? Why or why not?
3. Lewis discusses a second textbook author, Orbilius. What example does Lewis find objectionable in his textbook? Explain why this example is objectionable.
4. For what three reasons does Lewis think that Gaius and Titius have inadvertently slipped into spreading their philosophy rather than teaching English?
5. Consider the following passage and Lewis's argument in support of it:  
Until quite modern times all teachers and even all men believed the universe to be such that certain emotional reactions on our part could be either congruous or incongruous to it—believed, in fact, that objects did not merely receive, but could merit our approval or disapproval, our reverence or our contempt (14).

Write one to two paragraphs in which you agree or disagree with this statement, being sure to provide reasons and examples to support your position.

6. What definition of *ordo amoris* does Lewis cite?
7. According to Lewis, what does Plato argue in the *Republic*?
8. What, according to Lewis, is the *Tao*? How is it related to moral objectivism?
9. According to Lewis, Plato shows that “the head rules the belly through the chest.” What does this mean by this? What are the three parts of man that Plato identifies here?
10. Why does Lewis title this essay *Men Without Chests*?

Questions for *The Way* (The *Tao*)

1. What is the practical result of education in the spirit of *The Green Book*?
2. What are the theoretical difficulties involved in the philosophy of Gaius and Titius? Provide a brief explanation of each.
3. What does Lewis mean when he writes that Gaius and Titius are skeptical of the values of others, but not of their own? Why does he think this is a problem?
4. Lewis writes that Gaius and Titius think of traditional values as “mere irrational sentiments” and that they wish to strip this away in order to find the foundation of the value. When he follows this line of reasoning, he arrives at two possible conclusions. What are these two possible foundations of value? Explain how Lewis thinks each one fails to provide a foundation for values.
5. What does Lewis conclude about the *Tao* on page 43?
6. What are the two ways of criticism that Lewis identifies? How might these be applied to the *Tao*?