Part of me also wonders about the extent to which Lewis's attempts to ground his defenses of Christianity on reason stem not only from his commitment to rationalism but also from his keen awareness about the needs of his audience. When addressing non-Christians, Lewis's choice to begin with reason may have been as much an expression of his rhetorical goodwill as it was a reflection of his philosophical commitments.

Be that as it may, Goetz has made another valuable contribution to Lewis scholarship through this intellectually engaging book. He has succeeded in demonstrating that we must add *philosopher* to the many hats worn by C.S. Lewis.

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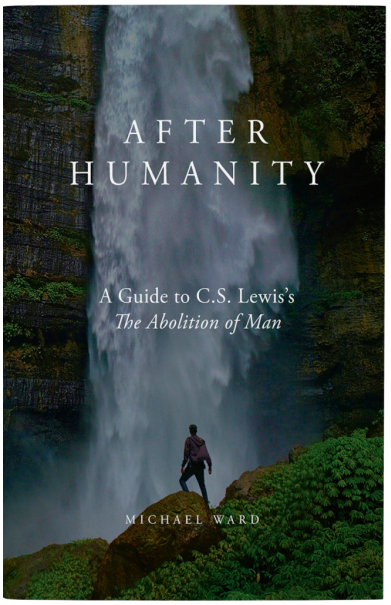
Michael Ward, *After Humanity: A Guide to C.S. Lewis's* The Abolition of Man. (Park Ridge, Illinois: Word on Fire Academic, 2021).



Aside from The Chronicles of Narnia, the two C.S. Lewis books I read as a teenager were *Mere Christianity* and *The Screwtape Letters*. Both opened my eyes to the way language has been increasingly manipulated since the Enlightenment. The preface to *Mere Christianity* explained how words had become disconnected from any fixed, objective, transcendent meaning (or signifier), leaving them to be determined instead by the prevailing mood of society or the emotional state of the individual using them. The first of *The Screwtape Letters* revealed how humans had been steered away from judging actions as good or evil and had focused their attention, instead, on whether those actions were idealistic or practical, conservative or liberal, old-fashioned or progressive, close-minded or free-thinking.

It wasn't until I began my career as an English professor and read Lewis's *The Abolition of Man* that I learned the technical word for this linguistic shift:

subjectivism. In its full form, subjectivism denies any objective ground to words used in the ethical (the good), metaphysical (the true), or aesthetic (the beautiful) realms. The meaning of words like virtue and vice, right and wrong, sublime and beautiful is wholly subjective, a register of how the person using those words feels about them.

The Abolition of Man exposes the dangers of subjectivism in the classroom, where it can be used to train students to debunk objective moral truths and standards, and then prophesies what will happen to a society that so trains its students. This it does with power and precision, but it is also a difficult, densely argued book that can be quite forbidding. Thankfully, Michael Ward, who gave the world of Lewis studies a key for understanding and unpacking The Chronicles of Narnia in his justly acclaimed *Planet Narnia*, has now provided a practical reader's guide for understanding and unpacking Lewis's most philosophical and prophetic book.

In *After Humanity: A Guide to C.S. Lewis's* The Abolition of Man, Ward, a Catholic priest who serves as a senior research fellow at Blackfriars Hall, University of Oxford, and a professor of apologetics at Houston Baptist University, conducts his readers on a page-by-page tour of *The Abolition of Man*. In addition to parsing Lewis's Latin phrases, identifying and explaining his various literary and philosophical allusions, and explicating some of his more difficult sentences, Ward sets the book in its historical context. He introduces his readers to logical positivism, the chief vehicle of subjectivism in Lewis's day, and its proponents (I.A. Richards and A.J. Ayer) and offers helpful background to the Green Book, its authors, and their pedagogical orientation.

He also does something quite unique. He collects together paragraph-long quotes from dozens of books and articles about Lewis and *The Abolition of Man* that delve into every nuance of Lewis's complex critique of subjectivism. He then keys these quotes to specific passages that he highlights as needing clarification. Rather than comment on each of these quotes, Ward lets them stand on their own—even ones by such critics of Lewis as B.F. Skinner, John Beversluis, and Gregory Bassham. This genial, somewhat episodic approach transforms Ward's book into a running commentary that is also an engaging conversation with key Lewis scholars of the last half century.

Still, Ward does have a point of view that prevents his book from devolving, as it almost does, into a series of incisive but disconnected annotations. Ward expresses that point of view through a number of observations that recur throughout his guide, giving it a direction and purpose—what Aristotle would have called a telos. Again and again, for example, Ward argues that *The Abolition of Man* is a work of philosophy rather than theology and that Lewis consciously downplayed the specifically apologetical approach he took in *The Pilgrim's Regress*, *The Problem of Pain*, and *Broadcast Talks* (later published as *Mere Christianity*) so as to reach a wider audience.

Lewis's determination to be philosophical rather than theological is signaled by his decision to begin his book with an epigraph from Confucius rather than the Bible. This approach continues throughout the book and even into the appendix, where Lewis includes relatively few quotes from the Bible. *The Abolition of Man*, Ward insists, "is not an apologia for Christianity, nor even for theism. Lewis makes no particular defence of his own religious commitments but sets out his stall much more broadly, showing himself prepared to make allies wherever he can find them" (19). That is why Lewis argues only "for the objectivity of value; the question as to whether the Tao has a 'supernatural origin' is not a question he is concerned with at the moment" (20)—though, Ward adds, he *does* take up that question and argue for it in *Mere Christianity*.

As Ward highlights Lewis's careful avoidance of theology in *Abolition*, so he highlights his downplaying of pedagogy in a book that bears the comically long and dull subtitle, "Reflections on Education with Special Reference to the Teaching of English in the Upper Forms of Schools." The real subject and focus of *Abolition*, Ward argues, is "not so much schoolroom pedagogy as moral philosophy, and a broadly based moral philosophy at that, embracing aspects of epistemology, virtue ethics, linguistic history, and anthropology" (11). Ultimately, Lewis's critique of The Green Book is a pretext for a much wider exploration of objective morality, the forces that have disrupted it, and the likely unstoppable dangers that disruption has set in motion.

This disruption and danger lie at the heart of Ward's central interpretation of *Abolition*: that it is a negative jeremiad that lacks the grace and hope that irradiate Lewis's apologetical works. Lewis, like an Old Testament prophet, warns of impending disaster rather than holding up a vision of imminent salvation. Lewis's main purpose, Ward argues, "is less to change our destination than to predict our destiny. He is simply charting the likely course of unchecked subjectivism, saying in effect, 'This philosophical error leads to sub-humanity and if a sub-human fate is what we want, that's the fate we'll get; we shouldn't be surprised by where we end up'" (188).

As a result, the small strands of hope that weave their way through the dark tapestry of *Abolition* are more Greco-Roman stoic and Norse pagan than they are Christian. What Lewis holds up as a counter vision to subjectivism is not the triumph of Christianity, but 1) Horace's Latin motto, "*Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*" ("sweet and fitting it is to die for one's country"), and 2) the heroic death of Thor and Odin fighting nobly but futilely against the inevitable victory of the dragons and the giants and the coming twilight of Ragnarok.

In *Abolition*, Lewis "ardently defends the Tao not so much because it told him how to live, still less because it entitled him to tell other people how to live, but because it told him how to view death. The Tao confirms that it is far more important to die on the right side than to live on the wrong side. The

worst that can happen to us is not death, but dishonour" (195). The Tao, in the generic, non-theistic way that Lewis defines it in *Abolition*, "discloses that death need not have a negative value or even a zero value. On the contrary, death for a good cause can have high value, perhaps the highest" (196).

Still, Ward does note that Lewis ends his book with a glimmer of Christian hope. The final listing in Lewis's appendix offers up three quotes on the nature of the good death: Plato's comment from *Phaedo* that philosophy is a practice for death; a Norse quote about Odin hanging sacrificially from the gallows; and Jesus comparing himself to the grain of wheat that dies to produce much fruit (John 12:24-25). "These last three citations," writes Ward, "mark a progress from Pagan wisdom about human death, to Pagan wisdom about divine death, to Christian wisdom spoken by the one whom Lewis believed to be both divine and human, 'the representative "Die-er" of the universe'" (185). Here, as in all of Lewis, general revelation ultimately points to special revelation.

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Gary Selby, *Pursuing an Earthy Spirituality: C.S. Lewis and Incarnational Faith*. (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2019).

Many Christians experience a tension between living a physical life and working towards the formation of our spiritual lives. It is tempting for us to have a disembodied, often joyless approach to spiritual formation by limiting our growth to what can be kept internal to our mind or soul and therefore separated from physical joy. Gary Selby, in his book *Pursuing an Earthy Spirituality: C.S. Lewis and Incarnational Faith*, provides a compelling alternative, based on the life and writings of C.S. Lewis, to separating our spiritual and physical lives. In his preface, Selby articulates his hope that this book will offer its readers a clear understanding of Lewis's ideas and the "possibility for flourishing in this life (with) a vibrant hope for the life to come" (x). He has achieved this and more. Readers will walk away from this book with a newfound appreciation of both Lewis's writings and the benefits of an embodied, or earthy, spirituality.

As an ecologist, I find great joy and peace when I spend time in God's creation. Yet I have spent a lifetime's involvement in church trying to reconcile what I experience in creation and what I have been taught about spiri-