

# Are we creating Men without Chests?

Much can be said and has been said about modern education. The catchphrase that seems to capture it best is 'college and career ready'. But what does that even mean? What does it mean to be prepared?

As we watch college students now requiring safe spaces and therapy due to [partiers wearing sombreros](#) or a "Trump 2016" chalked on a sidewalk, as we watch the [SAT standards lowered](#) with shocking frequency, as we learn that many [college graduates know little about the Constitution](#) and our own system of law and justice, we should seriously question whether parents and the public education system are actually preparing students for college.

As we watch one political or business leader after another [felled due to corruption and greed](#), as we watch the [out-of-wedlock birthrate](#) continue to rise, as we watch a [blood bath unfold in Chicago](#), we should seriously question whether parents and the public education system are actually preparing students for life.

In *The Abolition of Man*, C.S. Lewis warned about such possibilities when those in charge of educating no longer see value in true character education, in aiding students in the pursuit of truth, goodness, and beauty. We want these things, but we fail to teach children how to actually govern themselves.

*In a sort of ghastly simplicity we remove the organ and demand the function. We make men without chests and expect of them virtue and enterprise. We laugh at honor and are shocked to find traitors in our midst.*

That was actually the conclusion of his point. The build up to it, is worth considering as well:

*Where the old initiated, the new merely 'conditions'. The old dealt with its pupils as grown birds deal with young birds when they teach them to fly; the new deals with them more as the poultry-keeper deals with young birds – making them thus or thus for purposes of which the birds know nothing. In a word, the old was a kind of propagation – men transmitting manhood to men; the new is merely propaganda.*

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*... Let us suppose for a moment that the harder virtues could really be theoretically justified with no appeal to objective value. It still remains true that no justification of virtue will enable a man to be virtuous. Without the aid of trained emotions the intellect is powerless against the animal organism. I had sooner play cards against a man who was quite skeptical about ethics, but bred to believe that a 'gentleman does not cheat', than against an irreproachable moral philosopher who had been brought up among sharpers. In battle it is not syllogisms that will keep the reluctant nerves and muscles to their post in the third hour of the bombardment. The crudest sentimentalism ... about a flag or a country or a regiment will be of more use. We were told it all long ago by Plato. As the king governs by his executive, so Reason in man must rule the mere appetites by means of the 'spirited element'. The head rules the belly through the chest – the seat, as Alanus tells us, of Magnanimity, of emotions organized by trained habit into stable sentiments. The Chest-Magnanimity-Sentiment–these are the indispensable liaison officers between cerebral man and visceral man. It may even be said that it is by this middle element that man is man: for by his intellect he is mere spirit and by his appetite mere animal.*

*The operation of [much modern education and curricula] is to*

*produce what may be called Men without Chests. It is an outrage that they should be commonly spoken of as Intellectuals. This gives them the chance to say that he who attacks them attacks Intelligence. It is not so. They are not distinguished from other men by any unusual skill in finding truth nor any virginal ardor to pursue her. Indeed it would be strange if they were: a persevering devotion to truth, a nice sense of intellectual honor, cannot be long maintained without the aid of a sentiment which [many modern students] could debunk as easily as any other. It is not excess of thought but defect of fertile and generous emotion that marks them out. Their heads are no bigger than the ordinary: it is the atrophy of the chest beneath that makes them seem so.*

*And all the time – such is the tragi-comedy of our situation – we continue to clamor for those very qualities we are rendering impossible. You can hardly open a periodical without coming across the statement that what our civilization needs is more ‘drive’, or dynamism, or self-sacrifice, or ‘creativity’. In a sort of ghastly simplicity we remove the organ and demand the function. We make men without chests and expect of them virtue and enterprise. We laugh at honor and are shocked to find traitors in our midst. We castrate and bid the geldings be fruitful.*

Truly, if you want men of virtue, you must teach virtue. But to do so, you must also believe that there is such a thing as virtue.

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