

THE MAGICIAN'S TWIN

C. S. LEWIS ON SCIENCE,
SCIENTISM, AND SOCIETY

JOHN G. WEST, EDITOR

Description

Beloved for his Narnian tales and his books of Christian apologetics, best-selling author C.S. Lewis also was a prophetic critic of the growing power of scientism, the misguided effort to apply science to areas outside its proper bounds. In this wide-ranging book of essays, contemporary writers probe Lewis's warnings about the dehumanizing impact of scientism on ethics, politics, faith, reason, and science itself. Issues explored include Lewis's views on bioethics, eugenics, evolution, intelligent design, and what he called "scientocracy."

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FOREWORD

Phillip E. Johnson

C. S. LEWIS'S MANY ADMIRERS WILL BE EAGER TO READ THIS COLLECTION of articles, collected and edited by the Discovery Institute's John West, concerning Lewis's views of science, which he respected, and scientism, against which he warned. The book contains a timely and well-reasoned chapter about Lewis and intelligent design, which seems to have replaced creationism as the alternative most feared and reviled by Darwinists. Another chapter describes the subtle interconnection between *That Hideous Strength* (my favorite Lewis novel) and his much admired philosophical work, *The Abolition of Man*.

As West notes in chapter 1, C. S. Lewis remarked that “[t]he serious magical endeavour and the serious scientific endeavour are twins”—an image that gives this book its title. Lewis meant that modern science and magic have a common starting point in history, arising from efforts to understand and manipulate nature, and they have retained important and perhaps unexpected similarities down to the present. His point makes me think of what scientific studies of identical twins, separated at birth and raised apart, have shown. Such studies consistently demonstrate that, aside from physical resemblance, when the twins first meet each other decades later, they display striking similarities in matters so unexpected and detailed that they seem eerie. It is as if the studies were aimed at proving that, despite all we have learned about stars since 1600, astrology may nonetheless still have an impressive power of prediction.

Of course, the twin studies support genetics, not astrology, but what they teach us about identical twins raised apart makes it unsurprising that the scientific culture of the nineteenth and early twentieth century produced three great wizards—Charles Darwin, Karl Marx, and Sigmund Freud—whose concepts were so spellbinding that they set the

intellectual agenda for the entire twentieth century. In many ways, they still hold us in their grasp.

I would add to the list of scientific magicians the “DNA is everything” biologists, including the brilliant popularizer Richard Dawkins and the physicalist neuroscientists who assure us that our thoughts and decisions (including the conclusions of neuroscientists?) are no more than the effects of electro-chemical events in the brain. These have sought to make science indistinguishable from scientism, and thus have inadvertently alerted us to the continuing importance of C. S. Lewis’s exposure of the irrationality of scientism.

Overall, this collection charms the reader, not because Lewis has necessarily said the final word on every subject covered, but because his perceptive words illuminate every subject and inspire discussion in which participants can employ their own intellects to move ever closer to the truth.