

Lost in the Cosmos  
Walker Percy

Percy asks all the right questions for our time. Doesn't answer any. His purpose is to show the futility of looking for definitive answers to any of them.

His central thesis is how unique and weird man is in the cosmos. The center of his book is a dissertation on semiotics. Man is the only animal with language, with the ability and propensity to deal both with objects and the signs that denote those objects. And most curiously, though he is successful in dealing with every other element of his universe by manipulating signs (language) that describe them, he cannot deal with himself in that way. For this reason he can understand external things better than self.

Using only himself as a reference, he cannot define himself in terms of objectives, morality, purpose or any of the terms that are thought to give meaning to life. Meaning comes only by adopting something external. What, then? science, religion, consumerism? All serve as religions in that they must be adopted without serious examination. Though Walker is known (?) to be a Catholic Christian he does not preach at all in this book. Only asks questions that would lead one to think that the Christian religion is as good as any of the religions that don't call themselves such.