



## The Absolute at Large (Bison Frontiers of Imagination)

By Karel Capek

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**The Absolute at Large (Bison Frontiers of Imagination)** By Karel Capek

In this satirical classic, a brilliant scientist invents the Karburator, a reactor that can create abundant and practically free energy. However, the Karburator's superefficient energy production also yields a powerful by-product. The machine works by completely annihilating matter and in so doing releases the Absolute, the spiritual essence held within all matter, into the world. Infected by the heady, pure Absolute, the world's population becomes consumed with religious and national fervor, the effects of which ultimately cause a devastating global war. Set in the mid-twentieth century, *The Absolute at Large* questions the ethics and rampant spread of power, mass production, and atomic weapons that Karel Capek saw in the technological and political revolutions occurring around him. Stephen Baxter provides an introduction for this Bison Books edition.

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## The Absolute at Large (Bison Frontiers of Imagination) By Karel Capek Bibliography

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"Capek's skewering of human greed and faith is all the more impressive given that the novel was originally published in 1922."—Pedro Ponce, *Review of Contemporary Fiction*  
(Pedro Ponce *Review of Contemporary Fiction*)

"Capek offers the tale of a machine capable of generating limitless energy that also releases the unknown spiritual essence locked within physical matter, with cataclysmic results."—*Library Journal*  
(*Library Journal*)

"*The Absolute at Large* goes beyond the religious fervor of Nazism, foreshadowing the collectivization of Communism and the emergence of a free market too wide for any known West."—*Village Voice*  
(*Village Voice*)

"A satirical science fiction classic. . . . Though Capek wrote *The Absolute at Large* more than 80 years ago, it *absolutely* retains its wit and relevance today."—Donna McCrohan Rosenthal, *News Review*  
(Donna McCrohan Rosenthal *News Review*)

"Capek's dialog is fantastic, his characters richly drawn. But his vision of a world transcendently captivated by an apparent higher calling and then hoodwinked into war for nine years over a source of fuel is so prescient, it makes the novel seem like it was written today."—Cara Hoffman, NPR's *All Things Considered*  
(Cara Hoffman *NPR's All Things Considered* 2011-04-21)

#### Language Notes

Text: English, Czech (translation)

#### About the Author

Karel Capek (1890–1938) was an acclaimed Czech author of novels, plays, essays, political writings, and short stories. His works include R.U.R., the famous play in which Capek coined the word “robot.” Stephen Baxter is the author of several science-fiction works, including the Philip K. Dick Award–winning *Vacuum Diagrams*, and the coauthor, along with Arthur C. Clarke, of *The Light of Other Days*.

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