# The Triple Enigma: Fact, Truth, and Myth as the Key to C. S. Lewis's Epistemological Thinking

Charlie Starr

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Middle Tennessee State University
College of Graduate Studies in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Arts

May 2002

Committee:

Theodore J. Sherman, Director

David Lavery

Peter J. Schakel

William Connelly, Chair, Department of English

Donald L. Curry, Dean, College of Graduate Studies

Abstract

C. S. Lewis's complex epistemology has drawn much critical interest. Unfortunately, Lewis never produced a definitive epistemological essay or book; rather, his thoughts on how we know are scattered throughout his writings. The result is critical confusion about such key issues as Lewis's definition of myth, his view of reality, and whether or not he believed the imagination to be a truth-bearing faculty. A sentence in *Perelandra* provides the framework for this systematic study of Lewis's epistemology: "Long since on Mars, and more strongly since he came to Perelandra, Ransom had been perceiving that *the triple distinction of truth from myth and of both from fact* was purely terrestrial–was part and parcel of that unhappy division between soul and body which resulted from the Fall" (143-44, emphasis added). This dissertation investigates this "triple distinction" and examines Lewis's use of "truth," "myth," "fact," and related words throughout his works.

Lewis views "reality" as "sacramental" and multi-leveled. God is the independent, uncreated "Fact," and all created reality/fact depends entirely on Him. "Truth" is defined contextually according to this hierarchy of being: In the higher reality of heaven, truth *is* reality; in the lower reality of earth, truth is an abstraction corresponding to reality. "Myth" in heaven is "What Really Is," the "I Am," palpably real and utterly factual. On earth, "myth" reveals a glimpse of heavenly reality perceived in imaginative form. At Christ's Incarnation, heavenly myth became earthly fact. Working together, reason and imagination can apprehend a clear and true vision of reality (heavenly and earthly).

The introductory chapter reviews Lewis criticism; chapter two investigates Lewis's view of "fact" and "reality"; chapter three examines Lewis's view of "truth"; chapter four analyzes "myth" and "mythopoeisis"; chapter five considers "reason" and "imagination"; and chapter six synthesizes the study into a Lewisian epistemology.

To Becky

for endurance.

Acknowledgments

Greatest thanks to my dissertation director, Ted Sherman, for his unwaivering expectation of excellence, the dissecting precision of his editor's pen, and for taking on a project that was at the edge (if not sometimes over it) of my abilities. Thanks also to the other committee members, David Lavery, who reminds those who love C. S. Lewis that Owen Barfield is worth a second look, and Peter Schakel, whose foundational work in Lewis's epistemology was the impetus for this study. Thanks to Allen Hibbard, Director of the graduate program in English at Middle Tennessee State University for his years of kindness and advice and for being the only truly post-modern man I have ever met.

Sincerest thanks to the faculty and staff of Kentucky Christian College who have prayed for and supported me for the last six years. I am especially grateful to Drs. Fawn Knight and Kelvin Jones for their encouragement, interest, humor, and hugs, and to Dick Damron for telling me about MTSU. My academic deans, Blanche Glimps and Jim Estep eased my load when I needed it; thank you. A thank you to Brian and Kelly Beesley for the lap top–it allowed me to see my family while working on this project. And thanks to Tom Scott and his library staff and my work studies Mary, Greg, Kristen, Jason, Brian, and Angela for the leg work done on the research end of this dissertation.

To my children, Bryan and Alli: thank you for helping your mother and tolerating the days and weeks I was too busy just plain gone.

To Becky: thanks for believing in me.

To Jack: thanks for writing–for the magic.

To my God, my Jesus: thanks for giving him to us.

Contents

Page

Page

## Chapter One

## The Problem of *Perelandra*

If C. S. Lewis had written only the Chronicles of Narnia, his place in literary history as one of the great writers of children's literature would have been established. The Narnia books continue in print more than fifty years after their initial publication. Of course Lewis did not write these books only. His other fiction works also remain popular in the general market and among literary critics. The Ransom trilogy is a milestone in the development of science-fiction, elevating the genre beyond the level of pulp entertainment to one of spiritual and ethical insight. And the depth, complexity, structure, themes, and characters in Lewis's last novel, *Till We Have Faces,* are of such quality as to demand critical attention. In addition to the merits attributable to Lewis for his fiction, however, also worth acknowledging is his diversity as a writer. Lewis's critical works (*The Allegory of Love; English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, Excluding Drama;* and *A Preface to* Paradise Lost among others) continue to be published, reviewed, and referenced in critical discourse. Lewis's apologetical works continue in popularity among Christians of varying denominations. *Mere Christianity, The Problem of Pain, Miracles*, and others still strengthen the faith and intellect of believers around the world as well as convincing non-believers that Christianity is true. The apologetical works provide insight into Lewis's literary endeavors and his philosophy and theology offer insight into his fiction and poetry. Because Lewis was such a diverse and prolific writer, his works provide the opportunity for critical study on diverse topics as well as for studies in the synthesis of a creative thinker's art, artistic (in this case literary) theory, and philosophical

perspective.

Lewis studies is a burgeoning field, fueled by such diverse causes as his influence on Christian thinking; the 1993 release of *Shadowlands*, Sir Richard Attenborough's film dramatization of Lewis's life; his historically recent position (Lewis died in 1963 on the same day as Aldous Huxley and John F. Kennedy) and, therefore, the availability of resources for scholarship (Lewis texts and acquaintances still living); the volume of his work, for he was a prolific writer; and the variety of his work (Lewis wrote extensively in apologetics, fiction, and literary criticism). The literary scholar finds especially in Lewis's novels and criticism a rich field for study. His works have been analyzed, his ideas catalogued and critiqued, his life storied in numerous biographies in the last forty years,[1] yet more work remains to be done.

## I. The Triple Enigma

One aspect of Lewis studies that has received much attention is "myth." A central concern of Lewis's was the significance of myth--its meaning and function--as was identifying the qualities in literature which make a work "mythopoeic." He discusses myth in books and essays written throughout his life, from his first work of fiction (*The Pilgrim's Regress*) to his last (*Till We Have Faces: A Myth Retold*), from his theological apologetics (*Miracles*) to his literary criticism (*An Experiment in Criticism*). Lewis argues that the crux of history, the moment around which all other historical moments revolve, is the Incarnation of Christ, when 'myth became fact' (*Miracles* 143). Because of its significance in his work, myth has been discussed at length in both popular and scholarly works on Lewis.

One puzzle, however, has been overlooked in previous studies of myth in Lewis's works. This "triple enigma" appears in a single passage in *Perelandra*, the second book of Lewis's Ransom trilogy. The protagonist, Elwin Ransom, having visited Mars in the previous novel (*Out of the Silent Planet*), is now on Venus, or Perelandra, where he has been sent by angelic servants of God to help prevent the fall of the "Eve" of that paradisal world. The dark archon of earth, however, has sent a demon-possessed man to tempt the woman into sin. Ransom comes to the gradual realization that he must try to kill the possessed "Un-man," bringing the spiritual battle against the devil into the physical world. At first he thinks such a possibility to be mythological. Then comes the passage containing the triple enigma:

> Long since on Mars, and more strongly since he came to Perelandra, Ransom had been perceiving that the triple distinction of truth from myth and both from fact was purely terrestrial–was part and parcel of that unhappy division between soul and body which resulted from the Fall. Even on earth the sacraments existed as a permanent reminder that the division was neither wholesome nor final. The incarnation had been the beginning of its disappearance. In Perelandra it would have no meaning at all. Whatever happened here would be of such a nature that earth-men would call it mythological. (*Perelandra* 143-44)

And then Lewis is done. He does not explain Ransom's perceptions, does not define what he means by distinguishing fact, truth, and myth from each other; nor, strangely enough, does anyone else. Scholarship is replete with discussions on Lewis's view of

myth and of truth, but very few critics have systematically investigated the problem of fact/truth/myth which *Perelandra* places before us. Thus a gaping hole exists in the criticism of these concepts as they are used in the space trilogy and as they figure in Lewis's other writings.

## II. The Epistemological Problem

The *Perelandra* passage can no longer be ignored because of the significant path of epistemological investigation which the triple enigma maps out for Lewis criticism. Several of the concepts in the enigma are standard Lewis fare: Lewis wrote extensively on the importance of truth and the validity of reason for discovering it.[2] Truth–or the related topic of reason–receives an entry in the latest anthologies about Lewis's writings.[3] Myth receives the same treatment from these sources,[4] and numerous scholarly articles make myth and its related topic imagination a central (if not *the* central) point of discussion.[5] Discussions also abound on reason and imagination in Lewis's thinking.[6] Not as prevalent a concern but certainly present in writings about Lewis are questions of his epistemology (especially as it relates to the relationship between imagination and truth and to his theory of literary criticism) and his view of the nature of reality.[7]

The triple enigma is a road map for new insights into Lewis's thinking; however, it is one which thus far has been largely ignored. No critical studies, whether article or book length, of *Perelandra* or the Ransom trilogy as a whole discuss the fact/truth/myth passage as thoroughly as its implications demand. One reason for this may be simply that the problem appears at first not to be so enigmatic. Scholarly readers used to the kinds of distinctions Lewis makes may not have seen an enigma at all and therefore passed it over.

Contemporary American English usage, for example, often uses the words "truth" and "fact" synonymously. A thing that is true is a fact; a thing that is a lie never happened. Darol Klawetter makes this very point after looking at dictionary definitions of the words: "Each definition basically refers to the other and I have always thought of these terms as near synonyms, until I read Lewis." For the average reader, to separate truth from fact might be a puzzle indeed. Those who know Lewis well, however, know that he distinguishes fact as what *is* (objects or events) and truth as statements we make *about* facts. We see a car. The car itself is a fact. We say, "There is a car." This is a truth statement made about the fact (cf. *Miracles* 27).

Making a distinction between fact and truth is more easily done than eliminating the distinction between fact and myth, words typically used as opposites, even in critical writing. Nevertheless, scholars familiar with Lewis's use of myth in association with either truth or fact might have seen less significance in the enigma passage and passed it over.

Whatever the reason for its being critically overlooked, the triple enigma passage is worth careful consideration because the uniqueness of the three terms being so juxtaposed sends the critic into areas of thought one might not otherwise consider. Specifically, the interrelationship of these three key terms may lead Lewis criticism to a more complete "Lewisian" epistemology. Consider, for example, one of Lewis's most illuminating essays on the nature of myth. "Myth Became Fact" is a favorite source among critical discussions of the topic. This brief but meaningful essay is frequently referred to as a source for defining Lewis's concept of myth.[8] But in order to explain

myth in the essay, Lewis begins by presenting an epistemological problem:

> Human intellect is incurably abstract. Pure mathematics is the type of successful thought. Yet the only realities we experience are concrete–this pain, this pleasure, this dog, this man. While we are loving the man, bearing the pain, enjoying the pleasure, we are not intellectually apprehending Pleasure, Pain, or Personality. When we begin to do so, on the other hand, the concrete realities sink to the level of mere instances or examples; we are no longer dealing with them, but with that which they exemplify. This is our dilemma–either to taste and not to know or to know and not to taste–or, more strictly, to lack one kind of knowledge because we are in an experience or to lack another kind because we are outside it. [ . . . ] Of this tragic dilemma myth is the partial solution. In the enjoyment of a great myth we come nearest to experiencing as a concrete what can otherwise be understood only as an abstraction. ("Myth Became Fact" 65-66)

It is in this epistemological context that Lewis goes on to the definitions frequently referenced in studies on myth.

Lewis develops the same tension between myth and fact in *Pilgrim's Regress* when John enters the caves beneath the mountains:

> Of all the people he had met in his journey only Wisdom appeared to him in the caverns, and troubled him by saying that no man could really come where he had come and that all his adventures were but figurative, for no

> professed experience of these places could be anything other than mythology. But then another voice spoke to him from behind him, saying:
>
> 'Child, if you will, it *is* mythology. It is but truth, not fact: an image, not the very real. But then it is My mythology. The words of Wisdom are also myth and metaphor: but since they do not know themselves for what they are, in them the hidden myth is master, where it should be servant: and it is but of man's inventing. But this is My inventing, this is the veil under which I have chosen to appear even from the first until now.' (169)

The problem of mythology presented by Wisdom is answered by the voice of God as necessitated by human limitations on knowing. In the two passages just quoted, as well as in the triple enigma, fact and myth, or fact, myth, and truth are juxtaposed; and in each passage, "knowing" is an important concept. The triple enigma is an epistemological problem and must be treated as such. To date such treatment has scarcely occurred in Lewis scholarship.

The critical literature on Lewis's epistemology reveals that scholars have focused on two modes of knowing on which Lewis himself focused: "reason" and "imagination." This dualistic approach to Lewis's epistemology has established a reductive dichotomy which excludes a key third element: reality itself. This, in turn, has led to a major misunderstanding about Lewis's theory of imagination (and therefore about his epistemology as a whole). The mistake in thinking leads to the formulation of the following questions: if reason can apprehend truth, what about imagination? Did Lewis

believe the imagination had value as a tool for knowing truth? If not, what value did it have? These are the wrong questions to ask.

The triple enigma expands critical understanding of Lewis's epistemology in two ways. The minor key is that the enigma passage reminds the reader to think not only about imagination, but also about myth, which, though perceived through the imagination, is not the same thing as imagination. A focus on myth provides a further reminder that there is a mode of knowing *besides* reason. Myth is epistemologically valid, even if the knowledge it reveals cannot be stated in abstract propositions. The first mistake a study of Lewis's epistemology must set aside is to say that the only and final goal of epistemology is to know truth. Any epistemological system derived from Lewis must recognize that, though epistemology is about knowing, reason is not the only *mode* of knowing available to us, nor are the abstract propositional statements of truth we derive from reason the only conclusions we can come to in the pursuit of knowledge. Nevertheless, many Lewis critics find in his writings a pervading tension between reason and imagination which they formulate as a tension between that faculty which can know truth (reason) and that faculty which cannot know truth (imagination) *and therefore cannot reveal a knowledge of anything at all.* The italicized clause here, implied if never directly stated by Lewis critics, represents the problem in current discourse on Lewis. The question as formulated in Lewis criticism is frequently this: did Lewis ever believe that the imagination can know truth? And by this question, the critics really mean did Lewis believe the imagination capable of knowing anything of value or anything about reality at all?[9] In other words, when many critics discuss Lewis's epistemology, or his

theories about reason and imagination, they misuse the term "truth" either as a synonym for all knowledge or as a synonym for reality. Lewis uses the word "truth" in complex and varied ways, but ways which do *not* demand a conclusion that Lewis viewed the imagination as epistemologically inferior to reason.

The major key, the second and more significant way the triple enigma expands critical understanding of Lewis's epistemology, is that the triple enigma sets the critic on the right track toward a truly Lewisian epistemology by adding "fact" to the equation. Each term of the enigma is significant or has a related term that is significant to Lewis's epistemology. Critics have discussed reason and truth, and imagination and myth at length and in relation to epistemological concerns. A term connected to "fact" that has been generally ignored and that may be more important to understanding Lewis's epistemology is "reality." A fact/reality emphasis in pursuing a Lewisian epistemology will break critical discourse out of the limitations of the reason/imagination dichotomy. Where previous attempts at a Lewisian epistemology have floundered in the question of imaginative truth, the epistemology presented here will begin with the understanding that the primary concern of knowledge is not truth statements about reality but reality itself (physical, spiritual, conceptual, even mythic). Only within this understanding can Lewis's views of knowledge, truth, and imagination be defined, and this understanding can also reveal what relationship Lewis sees, if any, between truth and imagination.

Furthermore, a careful study of Lewis's view of a complex, multi-leveled reality indicates that his definitions of knowing, reasoning, imagining, truth, and myth change depending on the *level* of reality at which they operate. On earth, for example, truth is an

abstract propositional statement that corresponds to reality, but in heaven, Lewis suggests, truth is concrete and can be embraced (see chapter three). Reality's levels do not, however, consist of only heaven and earth (see chapter two), and the definitions, even the very natures (as in the above example) of reason, or truth, or myth will vary in Lewis's writings depending on the level of reality in which he places them. This recognition, in turn, explains a number of seemingly contradictory statements Lewis makes about myth, truth, and imagination throughout his writings, contradictions which many critics have mistakenly attributed to changes in Lewis's thinking about these concepts (see chapters four and five). *Perelandra*'s other-worldly setting proves the significance of the idea of levels of reality in Lewis's epistemology. *Perelandra* allowed Lewis an opportunity for epistemological speculation. By taking Ransom to an unfallen world, Lewis was able to leave our earth-bound epistemological framework behind, a framework corrupted by sin and divorced from the God who is the source of knowing. The science-fiction setting allowed Lewis to consider under what circumstances–that is, in what conditions of reality–the distinctions among myth, truth, and fact might disappear.

Thus, the triple enigma may serve as a road map that will enable the Lewis critic to better understand the major concepts of reality, truth, myth, reason, and imagination in Lewis's thinking; studying its key terms will advance the work on a Lewisian epistemology, and, related to that epistemology, will draw the reader nearer to solving the controversy over whether or not Lewis viewed the imagination as a truth-bearing faculty.

## III. Critical Silence/Critical Problems

David C. Downing writes that the "Ransom trilogy was written as 'holiday

fiction' [for pleasure reading], and he [Lewis] wrote only one handwritten draft of each fantasy, with just a few minor revisions, before sending them off to the publisher" (4). As enjoyable as the Ransom books were for Lewis and are for science-fiction fans, they have also been "praised for their evident erudition" (4), and have been the object of decades of critical study, all of which generally passes over the triple enigma passage. Critical studies of *Perelandra* generally either ignore the enigma passage completely or fail to grasp its full significance. Of those critics that do treat the passage, some focus on fact, some truth, some myth, and some on a combination of any two of the three. Rare is the critic, however, who treats all three. Rarer still is critical analysis of the passage for its epistemological implications.

In *C. S. Lewis: Man & Writer*, a collection of essays, George Musacchio looks at "the turning points in Ransom as he fights against the adversary of God and man" (74). He sees the turning point in Ransom's character as occurring in the struggle to obedience (75-76), but he does not discuss the triple enigma, only Ransom's reluctance, then eventual willingness to physically attack the Un-man. Nevertheless, Musacchio rightly establishes the context of the struggle in which the triple enigma occurs. It is Ransom's choice as to whether or not he will confront the Un-man in physical battle, that is, in the world of fact.

Thomas Howard also understands this context of fact. In chapter four of his book, entitled, "*Perelandra*: The Paradoxes of Joy." Howard defends Lewis's mix of realism and fantasy, and he defends fantasy proper against critics who label it as immature. Howard's reference to the triple enigma is focused on Ransom's struggle. After quoting

the passage, he notes Ransom's realization that the fight against the Un-man will have to be a physical one: "The struggle, obviously, is going to have to look like those deadly struggles you get in myths–Laocoon, Perseus, Hercules. The irony is that it is only Dr. Elwin Ransom of Leicester College, Cambridge, who is doing the fighting. How inauspicious!" (113).

Gregory Wolfe is the first critic to note the thematic control of the enigma passage over *Perelandra* as a whole; he understands that the passage is a commentary on the nature of reality:

> Ransom's education has led him to see that it is not merely the idyllic worlds of Malacandra and Perelandra which are "mythological," but that reality itself, when perceived truly, is as dense with meaning as myth. Throughout *Perelandra* a series of allusions links the action not simply to the Garden of Eden, but to other archetypal events and experiences as well. (68)

Wolfe understands that the enigma passage is about knowing a meaning-full reality, and this idea, central to Lewis's epistemology, has been missing from critical understanding of that epistemological system.

One of only two monographs on the space trilogy is David C. Downing's *Planets in Peril: A Critical Study of C. S. Lewis's Ransom Trilogy*. In the entire book, Ransom's struggle to obey the silent voice of Maleldil (God), which is telling him he must physically fight the Un-man, is discussed only twice. In one instance (chapter five), Downing discusses the struggle at length but with no reference to the triple enigma

passage. In the other instance (chapter two), he refers to the enigma passage and discusses the whole idea in a single paragraph:

> As he contemplates physical combat, Ransom's [sic] responds that "no such crude, materialistic struggle could possibly be what Maleldil really intended. [ . . . ] It would degrade the spiritual warfare to the condition of mere mythology" (143). He then comes to see that he himself is taking part in myth, that the distinction between myth and history occurs only on the fallen planet. (50)

Although Downing also rightly emphasizes the context of fact, that a critical study on the Ransom trilogy should discuss the enigma passage in only a paragraph seriously undermines the value of the study.

No critics discuss truth in the enigma passage, though one does consider truth in *Perelandra* as a whole. Jeanne Murray Walker's "Science Fiction: A Commentary on Itself As Lies" discusses self-commentary in the genre with studies on Robert Heinlein's *Time Enough for Love* and Lewis's *Perelandra*. Walker's reading of Lewis's use of the key terms is, however, a complete imposition of her own paradigm on the novel. She wrongly argues that "Lewis defines the human imagination as the least trustworthy of man's mental faculties" (34), and she claims that Lewis sees myth as confusing fiction with reality (35). Though Walker rightly identifies truth as an important concern of the novel, she offers error rather than insight into Lewis's epistemology.

Myth is a much more popular topic in criticism on the triple enigma and the space trilogy as a whole. Some of the earliest critical studies of the trilogy appear in the first

two issues of the journal *Mythlore*. These issues contain a trilogy of essays by Margaret Hannay (one for each book in the trilogy) that focus on myth in the books. The *Perelandra* essay identifies three central myths in the novel, all scriptural: an edenic myth, a redeemer myth, and an apocalyptic myth ("Mythology of *Perelandra*" 14-15). Hannay lists instances of these myths throughout the novel, but she passes over the myth/truth/fact passage.

W. D. Norwood Jr. treats the trilogy as "not only a myth, but a myth about myth" (68). The single unifying theme in the books, Norwood argues, is myth: "*Out of the Silent Planet* concerns false myth or superstition, *Perelandra* genuine myth, and *That Hideous Strength* a speculative notion of the author's that is best described as emergent myth" (68). Norwood even quotes the triple enigma passage (70), but only to prove that Perelandra is a planet "in the universe where myths exist" (71). Truth and fact and the relations among them and myth are ignored.

In *Modern Fantasy: Five Studies*, C. N. Manlove includes a chapter on *Perelandra*. He focuses primarily on the Un-man's temptation of the Queen. Manlove twice takes up the question of myth and fact. In the first instance he notes that on "the unfallen world of Perelandra, image and reality, 'myth' and 'fact', are joined in a vision of what we have lost. 'Myth' is the story of an event; 'fact' is the event itself" (112). This distinction exists because of the fall which has "divided Man from God, and image from truth" (113). Manlove rightly identifies the fall as having created divisions which cause problems for human knowing; however, his definitions of myth and fact are simplistic. Myth is more than just story (see chapter four), and events are not the only

facts (see chapter two).

In the second instance, Manlove quotes a lengthy passage from *Perelandra* that includes the triple enigma, but he devotes only a single, albeit insightful, paragraph to the problem:

> What Ransom means by the term 'mythology' is 'that which is untrue to the real issues that are at stake'; when he talks about truth, myth and fact, he means that hitherto men have distinguished myths as fictions both from a hidden meaning and from any basis in actuality. Thus, for example, men say that the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice is simply a symbolic and detachable account of seasonal death and rebirth, and that the story itself never occurred. To put it very crudely, the form of myth is both reduced to the status of a fiction and severed from its meaning. The separation of these three elements is but one extension of the self-divided state under which man has suffered because of his fall, and Ransom goes on to realize that it is this which will make men view any physical struggle he has with the Un-man as 'mythology' in the derogatory sense. They would see it, as he himself is tempted to do, as quite separate from the spiritual and intellectual mode in which he has opposed the Un-man so far, and as something which never really took place. But what Ransom is being asked to do is to set aside the dualistic thinking native to him as fallen man. It is being suggested to him–and us–that his distinction between the spiritual and the physical is not valid: that he has been fighting the Un-man with (to

> use what are false categories) bone and flesh from the time of Weston's arrival on Perelandra, and will go on warring with mind and soul up to the last moment when he smashes his opponent's face in with a stone. (140-41)

This text, however, is only a beginning place for understanding the enigma. Manlove's associating fact with the physical world and myth with the spiritual is reductive. Perelandra is not heaven, but an unfallen physical planet. Though he attempts to say that the distinction between the physical and mythic is invalid (a distinction people make, again, because of the fall), he fails to take into account the full depth of Lewis's platonic conception of fact as involving multiple levels of reality (see chapter two). More importantly, Manlove leaves the issue of truth out of his discussion altogether.

Martha C. Sammons's *A Guide Through C. S. Lewis's Space Trilogy* is updated and revised in her most recent book, *A Far-Off Country: A Guide to C. S. Lewis's Fantasy Fiction* which is the most significant recent criticism on the trilogy. In the 88 pages Sammons devotes to the trilogy, she spends a full five pages on the triple enigma (151-55). Sammons understands that the triple enigma is a road map to understanding Lewis's epistemology. It raises an epistemological dilemma and then hints at possible solutions. Sammons rightly identifies three elements in the problem: the limitations of abstraction (where *how* we experience remains divided from *what* we experience), a subject/object split, and a split between the lower "phenomenal" world and the higher "numinous" one (152), all of which have resulted from the fall. Sammons also sees myth as an integral part of knowing and its absence as the cause of a loss of meaning in the

world. She shows that an understanding of Lewis's view of *meaning* is imperative to fully understand his epistemology, and she discusses epistemological issues in the context of Lewis's idea of levels of reality, something few other studies of Lewis's epistemology do. Sammons's only major mistake is to make truth a synonym for reality without carefully defining what *level* of reality is being referred to. But even Lewis does this himself, and only a careful reading of every instance in which he uses the word "truth" reveals that he had multiple meanings for the word, and these meanings depended on the context or level of reality to which he was referring. Nevertheless, Sammons comes closer to understanding Lewis's epistemology than any other critic to date.

Sammons takes the reader from a focus on the enigma passage to a focus on epistemology. Most epistemological studies of Lewis emphasize (in varying combinations) truth, reason, myth, and imagination. Only two critics have seen fact or reality as key components in understanding Lewis's epistemology. *The Imaginative World of C. S. Lewis* by Mineko Honda begins with an important essay on "Imagination" in which the author discusses the nature of myth and its relationship to reality and truth. Her thesis is that Lewis saw the imagination as having the "power of intuition into the metaphysical reality of this world and heaven, and a power of communication of that reality. It perceives the meaning of the world, expresses that meaning, and enables us to participate in the metaphysical Reality" (1). What is significant in her study is the emphasis on reality as the epistemological goal, that is, as the goal of knowing, and she fully believes that "Lewis sees imagination as a faculty of grasping Reality" (25). In the third chapter, "Lewis's Works of Fiction–Participation in Reality," Honda rightly argues

that "In all his [Lewis's] writings, not only apologetics but literary criticisms and fiction as well, his main concern is the absolute and eternal Reality" or God (69). Lewis is also concerned with created reality, the world and man, and our relationship to all other realities. Honda argues that Lewis's fiction consists of illustrations of reality at all levels: "God and His world, relations between men and God, the way men attain true reality in that World of Reality" (69). These illustrations serve "to give the readers foretastes of that world," that is, of the true "World of Reality" (69).

Honda's ideas will be important throughout this study as will those of Leanne Payne who, even more than Honda, emphasizes the centrality of reality in Lewis's epistemology. In *Real Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Works of C. S. Lewis*, Payne's arguments of fact and reality as (at least partial) synonyms, of reality as multi-leveled, and of God as ultimate fact are central to an understanding of the triple enigma and Lewis's epistemology. Especially significant is her emphasis on sacrament as the unifying principle of spiritual and physical realms. It is in this context that Payne quotes and discusses the triple enigma passage. She then comments:

> Though uniquely Christian in its fullness, this [sacramental] view is rooted in Judaism. Very simply, *sacramental reality has to do with the means by which the Presence of God is mediated to fallen man*: and, as a principle, it was in effect before Christ, the "personalized core of Christian reality," descended into the flesh. Moses, we recall, descended from the mountain radiant with the glory of God.
>
> Before the Fall, of course, man experienced God's Presence

> continually. In *Perelandra*, Lewis depicts the life of an unfallen planet and an unfallen Eve (the Green Lady). The Green Lady, basking in pure goodness and listening always to Maleldil (God), is not even aware that she is "separate" from Him. Unlike the Green Lady, however, our first parents fell, and the first thing they did was to hide themselves from the Presence. They knew themselves to be separate.
>
> This is what the Fall was and is–separation from the Presence. Man fell from God-consciousness into the hell of self, and of self-consciousness. The history of fallen man can be summed up as a flight from the radiant substantiveness–the reality of the Presence and the Face of God. (32)

Payne emphasizes the relational quality of a world where myth, truth, and fact are not separate. Knowing is about relationship, being intimately connected with God. Thus, she directs our thinking about a Lewisian epistemology away from an exclusively reason-based approach, toward one that is more comprehensive and inclusive. For Lewis, knowing involves numerous elements which include reason along with imagination, experience, action, spiritual awareness, and the pursuit of a relationship with God.

As said above, most critical readings of Lewis's epistemology focus on some combination of reason, truth, imagination, and myth. A recent trend in critical publication on Lewis has been the encyclopedic format which allows for brief entries on several of these topics. Colin Duriez's *The C. S. Lewis Encyclopedia* is a revision of his 1990 *C. S. Lewis Handbook*. One entry, on "Meaning and Imagination," discusses the

relationship among reason, imagination, truth, and meaning. Duriez, unfortunately, muddles his use of the terms early in the entry, saying, Lewis "believed that in some real sense the products of imagination in the arts could be true. Myth could become fact" (127). But not all art is myth, and fact and truth are not the same thing (except in higher levels of reality). After this early mistake, however, Duriez rightly distinguishes between the functions of reason and imagination. He correctly emphasizes that meaning is a building block of knowing and that "good imagining is as vital as good thinking" (129). He also identifies and summarizes significant points in Lewis's epistemology from the latter's essay "Bluspels and Flalansferes":

> (1) There is a distinction between reason and imagination as regards roles–reason has to do with theoretical truths; imagination has to do with meanings. (2) There are standards of correctness, or norms, for the imagination, held tacitly and universally by human beings. (3) Meaning is a condition of the framing of truth; poor meanings make for poor thoughts. (4) The framing of truths in propositions necessitates the employment of metaphors supplied by the imagination. Language and thought necessarily rely upon metaphor. (129)

Duriez is most valuable when he points out the need for any study of Lewis's epistemology to include an examination of what Lewis meant by the terms "meaning" and "metaphor."

In the entry titled "Reality" in *The C. S. Lewis Readers' Encyclopedia*, edited by Jeffrey D. Schultz and John G. West Jr., Michael H. Macdonald suggests that "Lewis's

life and work can be considered an answer" to the question, "What is most real?" (348). Lewis sees reality as complex, and sacramental, and he sees God as the ultimate Reality for which all people yearn. Though Macdonald does not discuss reality in relation to epistemology, he is right in making it a central topic of Lewis's thinking. The entry on "Truth" by Iain T. Benson limits itself to a contrast of Lewis's view of truth as objective with the modernist view of truth as relative. Benson notes Lewis's emphasis on the dangers of subjectivism and on the objectivity of moral truth. The entries on "Myth" by Wayne Martindale, and "Myth Became Fact" by Anne Gardner, are excellent, though inadvertent, examples of the failure of Lewis criticism to resolve the question of the relationship between truth and myth and truth and imagination. In his entry, Martindale says,

> Lewis uses 'myth' to mean a story treating the 'permanent and inevitable,' those elements which are always a part of human experience. The greatest truths [ . . . ] are not a part of our concrete experience, so we understand them and speak of them as abstractions. In myth, however, we experience imaginatively, in the concreteness of story, something which would be abstract if translated out. (288)

The passage clearly implies that myth carries abstract truth made concrete. Gardner, summarizing Lewis's "Myth Became Fact" essay, notes that Lewis said even if "Christianity is merely mythical, this myth is vital–both central and life giving. The myth has outlived its proponents and opponents. What comes from the myth 'is not truth but reality (truth is always *about* something, but reality is that *about which* truth is)'" (288).

This apparent disagreement between Lewis critics exists because it appears to exist in Lewis. Where Lewis sometimes says myth reveals truth, he elsewhere says it reveals reality. Critics have either missed or ignored this inconsistency or tried to explain it as a change in Lewis's views over time. A better explanation emerges by looking at Lewis's complete epistemology with an emphasis on levels of reality.

Walter Hooper's *C. S. Lewis: Companion & Guide* is yet one more recent Lewis compendium, and one of the most comprehensive resources for Lewis studies to date. In his "Key Ideas" section, Hooper discusses myth at length (five pages) with such promising subtitles as "Christianity a 'True Myth'" (582) and "Myth as Fact" (583). Hooper does not, however, attempt to synthesize a Lewisian theory of myth. Rather, he points out that Lewis converted to Christianity because he discovered it to be a truth myth; he summarizes the "Myth Became Fact" essay; and he summarizes the passage from *An Experiment in Criticism* on defining what makes a story genuinely mythic. In other words, Hooper does a good job of pointing the reader to most of the key Lewis texts on myth from throughout his life (including conversion letters to Arthur Greeves and passages from *Pilgrim's Regress*, "Is Theology Poetry?," "Religion Without Dogma," *Miracles*, and *George MacDonald: An Anthology*); however, he does not contribute any new insights to the topic, such as an explanation for the inconsistencies among many of the passages on myth that he quotes within a few pages of each other. Hooper also offers extensive entries on "Reason and Imagination," "Myth and Imagination," "Imagination the 'organ of meaning,'" and "Myth as an 'organ' of reality" which deal with what may be *the* major question among Lewis critics in relation to his epistemology: did Lewis ever

believe the imagination was a truth-bearing faculty? Hooper says this was a major quest for Lewis, who, especially at the time of his conversion, was "struggling to find a clear connection between Imagination and Truth" (569). Hooper documents his discussion from the most significant Lewis texts, taking a clear, chronological approach to the problem.

But instead of dealing with the question as part of a complete epistemology that focuses on knowing reality, Hooper focuses only on the words "truth," "imagination," and "myth," and these almost in isolation from each other. He fails to identify correctly various usages for the term "truth" in Lewis's writings, usages that differ, again, based on levels of reality, and so he claims that Lewis's eventual conclusion that truth is not clearly connected to imagination was a failure in the quest: "Lewis was never able to claim as much objectivity for literature as he would have liked" (570). Hooper's conclusion implies that, in the end, Lewis valued reason over imagination and philosophical writing over literature. Such a conclusion is unwarranted in light of a complete Lewisian epistemology which sees the value of literature and imagination for knowing reality as a whole (not just truth statements about it) and which includes multiple definitions of truth as abstract statement, and, at higher levels, concrete reality (see chapter three).

Only a few monographs have come close to understanding the epistemological problems that surround Lewis's views on the various parts of the triple enigma. Leanne Payne's *Real Presence* and Mineko Honda's *The Imaginative World of C. S. Lewis* are the fullest explorations of Lewis's idea of the "real," of "fact." But for a comprehensive understanding of reason and truth, and imagination and myth in Lewis's thinking, one

book stands out over all others. Though subtitled *A Study of* Till We Have Faces, Peter J. Schakel's *Reason and Imagination in C. S. Lewis* concerns this study of Lewisian epistemology because it is a comprehensive examination of the concepts of reason and imagination and their relation to truth, fact, and especially myth. Even Walter Hooper singles out Schakel (along with Owen Barfield) as having written definitively on the issue of imagination. In the second part of the book, Schakel takes the reader chronologically through Lewis's works with the purpose of establishing the following thesis:

> This book examines the place of reason and imagination in the thought of C. S. Lewis and shows that a shift, not in basic positions or theory but certainly in emphasis and practice, occurs, not at the time of his conversion but in the late 1940's or early 1950's. Prior to that–in *Mere Christianity* and the Ransom trilogy,for example–Lewis relied heavily upon, or put his ultimate trust in, reason (thecapacity for analysis, abstraction, logical deductions), with imagination (theimage-making, fictionalizing, integrative power) playing a valued but limited supporting role. After that, Lewis's confidence in imaginative methods increases, and imagination becomes the more striking feature of his work from 1950 on–in the Chronicles of Narnia, for example. My purpose is to chart the changes briefly, account for them as fully as possible, and show that in some of his later works, such as *Till We Have Faces* and *Letters to Malcolm*, reason and imagination are, at last, reconciled and unified. (ix-x)

A point by point critique of Schakel's argument is beyond the scope of this study;

however, chapters four and five each raise important questions that Schakel's study will help answer.

A minor thesis in Schakel's book is that Lewis's view of myth was refined between the mid-1930s and mid-1940s as evidenced, for example, by the difference between Lewis's defining myth as "truth" in *Pilgrim's Regress* and as giving "tastes" of "reality," not truth in "Myth Became Fact" (*Reason and Imagination* 123). Chapter four's exploration of the question, 'did Lewis's view of myth change?' begins in the context of Schakel's exploration. Put briefly here, Schakel's contention that "Myth Became Fact" shows an advancement in Lewis's thinking about myth is accurate to an extent. The primary problem with Schakel's argument, however, is his claim that Lewis's writings about myth become no longer concerned with the relationship between myth and truth; rather, they become concerned with the relationship between myth and reality. Schakel's argument for this shift in Lewis's thinking is chronological, focusing on an analysis of key "myth" texts (123-24). A careful analysis of these and other texts, however, indicates that, though Lewis did take up a new interest in the relationship between reality and myth in "Myth Became Fact," he did not abandon his previous concern for the relationship between myth and truth. Schakel nevertheless rightly argues a significance for the "Myth Became Fact" essay. This study will attribute this significance to Lewis's developing a multi-leveled and sacramental view of reality along with a desire on his part to look at the epistemological implications of that view (especially in relation to truth and myth) in the late thirties through mid-forties.

An issue considered in chapter five is whether or not Lewis's post-conversion

view of imagination altered through the years. Schakel's argument for a change in 'emphasis' and 'practice' in Lewis's later writings is extensive. That Lewis wrote more imaginative texts later in life and all but abandoned the writing of theological apologetics is well documented. Now Schakel nowhere claims that Lewis's intellectual view of imagination changed in later years; however, his argument for a shift in Lewis's attitude and practice demands that subsequent criticism consider this possibility, for it will have direct bearing on the question of whether or not Lewis ever came to believe in the imagination as a truth-bearing faculty.

Schakel's epistemological focus in Lewis is on reason and imagination and how they help us know truth. More comprehensive in regard to epistemology is Stephen Thorson's "'Knowledge' in C. S. Lewis's Post-Conversion Thought: His Epistemological Method." Thorson's main thesis is that in "Religion: Reality or Substitute?" Lewis states his complete epistemological system: "Authority, reason, experience: on these three, mixed in varying proportions, all our knowledge depends" ("Religion" 41). Thorson proceeds to detail these approaches to knowing, but focuses primarily on reason. Thorson rightly concludes that Lewis's epistemology is not so much about knowing truth as it is about knowing reality. Thorson also rightly identifies two other important elements (besides reason) in Lewis's epistemology: authority and experience (and in *experience* Thorson connotes the significance of *reality* in the epistemological system).

Unfortunately, Thorson's treatment of experience limits the role of imagination–and ignores the role of myth–in human knowing:

> Lewis' view of man as body, soul, and spirit allowed him to divide

> experience into physical, psychological, and spiritual experiences. Man's bodily senses experience the physical world, or the world of objects. Man's soul experiences the subjective world of emotions, memory, and imagination. And man's spirit can experience the supernatural world of angels, devils, and God. ("'Knowledge'" 107)

Certainly imagination involves "subjective" and "psychological" qualities, but it stretches beyond the category of what man's 'soul experiences' in two ways. First, if thinking and experiencing are opposites, as Lewis says in "Myth Became Fact" (65), then imagination, if it belongs, as Thorson claims, to the category of experience, has nothing to do with thinking. But Lewis says that myth is a bridge between thinking and experiencing (66). In myth, and therefore in imagination, thinking and experiencing are brought together. Therefore, imagination must stand outside the category of experience to some extent. Secondly, imagination *does* have a dimension of spirit, a place where it touches higher reality beyond Thorson's category of soul. Lewis says this occurs when the imagination experiences Joy (see chapter five) and also in the relationship between imagination and myth: Myth is a revelation of spiritual reality experienced in the imagination (see chapter four). Herein also is the greatest limitation in Thorson's otherwise excellent description of Lewis's epistemology: his essay completely ignores the role of myth as a means of knowing reality. Lewis did not state his complete epistemological system in "Religion: Reality or Substitute?" That system must be gleaned from throughout his corpus and must include texts that deal with the roles of imagination and myth in knowing.

Sufficient evidence exists in Lewis's corpus (fiction and non-fiction) and in the

context of the *Perelandra* passage itself for launching an investigation of Lewis's epistemology using the triple enigma passage as a road map to the study. Beginning with the key words of the passage–"fact," "truth," and "myth"–and then expanding the scope of the inquiry to include the terms scholars have traditionally focused on–"reason" and "imagination"–this examination pulls together pieces of a puzzle from throughout Lewis's writings that will result in a more complete understanding of what C. S. Lewis meant by these five key terms, and, more significantly, it will result in a more complete understanding of his epistemology than has yet to emerge from critical discourse.

## IV. The Range of Discussion

Lewis's use of the words "fact," "truth," and "myth" is precise and based on a definite philosophical framework. Evidence abounds of what Lewis means by these terms, both contextually, where one can infer his meaning, and overtly, where Lewis defines the terms himself. His triple enigma reveals a kind of Lewisian epistemology, a theory of knowledge to which fact, truth, and myth each contribute uniquely.

Chapter two examines Lewis's use of "fact" and its various synonyms, especially, "reality." For Lewis, fact is the building block upon which his discussions on the nature of reality begin. God is the supreme 'Fact,' and all 'facthood' originates in Him. Reality contains the physical and the spiritual, the temporal and the eternal, the created and He who is uncreated. Reality is "hierarchical" in a modified platonic sense, "transpositional" (a term Lewis employs to describe the idea that higher realities encompass lower ones), and "sacramental," all of which are important terms in Lewis's thought. Lewis's belief in multiple levels of reality provides the context for a variety of statements (some seemingly

contradictory) he makes about truth, myth, reason, and imagination. How people know or may be able to know in heaven, for example, may provide answers to two epistemological problems with which Lewis was concerned: the constant separation of subject (knower) from object (the thing known) and the split between abstract thinking and concrete experiencing that make knowing difficult. Also important is the recognition, which a focus on Lewis's view of reality reveals, that his primary epistemological concern was with knowing *reality itself* rather than truths *about* it.

Chapter three examines Lewis's view of "truth." Its associate concept "reason" is critical in Lewis's thinking and is introduced in the chapter, though it is not fully taken up until chapter five. Lewis says truth is abstract, objective, known by reason, and discernible from fact in that truth refers to statements we make about reality, and fact consists of that concrete reality about which we make statements (*Miracles* 23-28); however, as Lewis suggests in the enigma passage, there may be circumstances where such distinctions break down. In the heaven of *The Great Divorce*, for example, truth is a concrete reality, more concrete than any physical object on earth (43). The epistemological dilemmas (the subject/object separation and the concrete/abstract split) will be readdressed at this chapter's end in light of any new understanding an examination of Lewis's view of truth affords.

Of the three concepts in the enigma, "myth," the topic of chapter four, is the one about which the most criticism has been written. Lewis calls myth a "real though unfocused gleam of divine truth falling on human imagination" (*Miracles* 176*n*.), although this is only one of many passages in which Lewis defines or clarifies his

thinking on the subject. In addition to defining myth, the chapter will explore Lewis's understanding of "mythopoesis" and its epistemological implications. Lewis was influenced by J. R. R. Tolkien's view of myth as "subcreation"; Tolkien (along with Lewis) was influenced by Owen Barfield's theory of linguistic history (as put forth in his book *Poetic Diction*). What Tolkien, Barfield, and Lewis say about mythopoesis bears directly on the problem of epistemological distance between subject and object as well as that between thinking and experiencing. The value of myth-making ("mythopoeisis") as a worthy literary endeavor is in part because the myths produced allow us to know in a way that Barfield claims humanity was once generally capable of and Lewis claims we will be capable of in heaven: knowledge in which subject and object are more intimately connected, in which knowing by thinking and knowing by experiencing are combined. Additionally, understanding Lewis's views on myth will require an initial investigation into his views on "meaning" and "imagination."

"Imagination," however, cannot be understood without looking at its connections, especially its contrasts to "reason." Chapter five examines these two modes of knowing along with ancillary issues that, nevertheless, must be considered in order to understand Lewis's complete epistemology. To understand Lewis on truth, reason, myth, and imagination, requires an exploration into his "Great War" with Owen Barfield, as well as what Lewis meant by the terms "analogy," "allegory," "symbol," "metaphor," and "meaning."

A sixth chapter synthesizes the study's conclusions into a "Lewisian epistemology," a comprehensive statement about how fact, truth, and myth, perceived in

relation, reveal Lewis's epistemology; under what circumstances the distinctions among the three terms finally break down; how the problems of the subject/object and thinking/experiencing dichotomies, which are at the heart of Lewis's epistemological inquiry, are solved; what Lewis finally means by the term "meaning" and its implications on his epistemology; and an answer to the "Holy Grail" of Lewis questions: did he ever come to believe that the imagination could be a truth-bearing faculty?

Notes

[1] See, for example, Green and Hooper, Sayer, Como, and Gresham.

[2] See, for example, *Mere Christianity* 3-7, *Miracles* 20-35, *The Abolition of Man,* and the essays "The Poison of Subjectivism," "On Ethics," "Bulverism," and "Meditations in a Toolshed."

[3] See Hooper *C. S. Lewis* 599-606; and Schultz and West (348-50) and (411-12).

[4] See Hooper *C. S. Lewis* 582-86; Schultz and West 287-88; and Duriez *C. S. Lewis* 133-39.

[5] See, for example, Lobdell 68, Lane 61, Hannay "C. S. Lewis's" 14-24, Kuteeva 265-284, and Markos 32-39.

[6] See Schakel's *Reason and Imagination in C. S. Lewis*, Michael Edwards, Filmer "The Polemic Image," Holyer, Honda, Hooper *C. S. Lewis*, and Thorson "Knowledge."

[7] See Schakel *Reason and Imagination* and "Seeing and Knowing, Bruce Edwards, Holyer, Thorson "Knowledge," Payne, and Honda.

[8] See, for example, Schakel *Reason and Imagination* (123), Honda (37-38), Burson and Walls (260-61), Duriez *C. S. Lewis* (135-39); Hooper *C. S. Lewis Companion and Guide* whose entry "Myth as Fact" begins with the "Myth Became Fact" article (583-86); and Schultz and West's *C. S. Lewis Readers' Encyclopedia* which dedicates an entire entry to the article itself.

[9] See, for example, Hooper *C. S. Lewis* 569-74.

## Chapter Two

## Fact/Reality

"Fact" is the beginning place for Lewis's epistemology. Lewis critics frequently say that Lewis's epistemology is about knowing truth. But Lewis would say truth is always *about* something; when one knows truth, one knows *about* the facts of reality. But when one seeks to know, one is not only interested in knowing *about* reality; one wants to know *reality itself*. Though Lewis uses the word "fact" in a straight-forward consistent manner, he associates "fact" with several other words as either partial or complete synonyms. "Reality" is the primary synonym for "fact" in Lewis's writing but others include "event," "existence," "history" (though there may be some connotative distinctions to uncover), and, to a lesser extent, "nature." When studying Lewis's use of fact, one quickly learns that reality is a much more significant topic in his writings than has heretofore been realized in critical discourse, more so, perhaps, than even the favorite Lewis topics of "myth" and "imagination."

### I. The Synonyms

"Myth Became Fact" and *Miracles* are the richest resources for "fact" and its synonyms in Lewis's writings. In "Myth Became Fact," Lewis distinguishes between "truth" and "reality": "truth is always *about* something, but reality is that *about which* truth is" (66). Consider a similar passage from *Miracles*: "Events in general are not 'about' anything and cannot be true or false. (To say 'these events, or facts are false' means of course that someone's account of them is false.)" (27). Taken together, these two texts make it apparent that the word "reality" (note also the word "event") is

synonymous with "fact" in Lewis's thinking.

In the paragraph that follows the one quoted above from "Myth Became Fact," Lewis argues that "the heart of Christianity is a myth which is also a fact. The old myth of the dying god . . . comes down from the heaven of legend and imagination to the earth of history. It happens–at a particular date, in a particular place, followed by definable historical consequences" (66).[1] This line makes synonymous connections between "fact" and "history," "fact" and "events" (the reference, "It happens"), and, to an extent, "fact" and "earth." This latter connection is more apparent at the end of the essay: "For this is the marriage of heaven and earth: Perfect Myth and Perfect Fact" (67).

Several passages in *Miracles* indicate these and other synonymous connections. In noting that "concrete, individual, determinate things do now exist," Lewis demands that these "are not mere principles or generalities or theorems, but things–facts–real, resistant existences" (115). He shortly, thereafter, refers to the "brute fact of existence, the fact that it is actually there and is itself." The other obvious passage is the first footnote in chapter fifteen which will be referred to throughout this study. In discussing the relationship of "fact," "truth," and "myth" in this passage, Lewis connects the words "fact" and "history": "just as, on the factual side, a long preparation culminates in God's becoming incarnate as Man, so, on the documentary side, the truth first appears in *mythical* form and then by a long process of condensing or focusing finally becomes incarnate as History" (176*n*).[2] The repetition of the word "incarnate" makes it clear that the "factual side" reference matches the reference to history.

Other connections in *Miracles* are less blatant, more implied. For example, Lewis

suggests, "a complete philosophy must get in *all* the facts" (58); later, he refers to the "rightful demand that all reality should be consistent and systematic" (83). In light of the more direct connections made in the book, the inference of synonymous use seems justified here. Even stronger are the references to God as "the basic, original, self-existent Fact" (43), and as "an uncreated and unconditioned reality" (105). Thus the connection between fact and reality is clear.

Doubtless Lewis would make some distinctions between the word "fact" and these various synonyms could one ask him to. However, because Lewis did not draw such distinctions in his works, any discussion about "fact" must be broadened to a consideration of related words, including "history," "events," "existence," and, most of all, "reality." Moreover, one other word may possibly be added to this list.

The references seen so far to facts/events occurring on the 'earth of history,' as opposed to the heavenly realm of myth, warrant the reader's considering whether or not the word "nature" belongs in the umbrella of synonyms for "fact." In *Miracles* Lewis says that what the "Naturalist believes is that the ultimate Fact, the thing you can't go behind, is a vast process in space and time which is *going on of its own accord*" (14). In other words, the ultimate fact is nature. But Lewis does not accept this, arguing that "Nature is a *creature*, a created thing, with its own particular tang or flavour" (*Miracles* 87). As such it is created fact. He claims that "God is basic Fact" (121), that the "Supernaturalist agrees with the Naturalist that there must be something which exists in its own right; some basic Fact" (15). The Supernaturalist, moreover, believes that facts fall into two categories. In the first category is the "One Thing which is basic and

original, which exists on its own." In the second category are things that exist because of the One Thing (God): "The one basic Thing has caused all other things to be. It exists on its own; they exist because it exists" (15). Lewis says that the Naturalist thinks nature is "the ultimate and self existent Fact" (87), whereas the Supernaturalist thinks "God is basic Fact or Actuality, the source of all other facthood" (121). Elsewhere Lewis calls God the "fountain of facthood" (117). Thus it is clear that although "nature" is not a synonym for "fact," nevertheless there is a connection because all facts, including nature, derive from the one Fact (God).

## II. Definitions

With regard to the definition of fact and, especially, reality there have been three (possibly four) stages in C. S. Lewis's intellectual development: Lewis the atheist, Lewis the anti-naturalist or idealist, and Lewis the supernaturalist (the fourth stage, if there is one, did not change his view of reality but may have changed his view of mankind's ability to know reality).

The first Lewis, the atheist, is apparent in his earliest use of the term fact. In 1916, the young C. S. Lewis had been an atheist for several years and had become a demythologizer as the following quote shows:[3]

> That the man Yeshua or Jesus did actually exist, is as certain as that the Buddha did actually exist: Tacitus mentions his execution in the Annals. But all the other tom-foolery about virgin birth, magic healings, apparitions and so forth is on exactly the same footing as any other mythology. After all even your namesake king Arthur really lived once (if

> we are to believe the latest theories) but it doesn't follow that Malory's old book is history. [ . . . M]ost legends have a kernel of fact in them somewhere. (*Letters to Greeves* 18 October 1916, 137)

The first significant use of the word "fact" seen in C. S. Lewis is his use of it in contrast to legend or mythology.

By this time (October 1916), however, Lewis had already begun flirting with idealism. According to Hooper, Lewis became very interested in philosophy in 1917, at which time he began reading the philosophy of Berkeley (Hooper "Preface" xxix). In July 1917, Lewis writes to Greeves, saying, "The part I have been reading is 3 dialogues written to prove the existence of God–which he does by dis-proving the existence of matter" (24 July 1917, 196). Thus began a gradual process in which "the conviction was growing in Jack that nature was evil" (Hooper "Preface" xxxi). By 1918, while fighting in the trenches in World War I, Lewis could write to Greeves,

> You will be surprised and I expect, not a little amused to hear that my views at present are getting almost monastic about all the lusts of the flesh. They seem to me to extend the dominion of matter over us: and, out here, where I see spirit continually dodging matter (shells, bullets, animal fears, animal pains) I have formulated my equation Matter=Nature=Satan. And on the other side Beauty, the only spiritual and not-natural thing that I have yet found. (23 May 1918, 214)

Clearly, Lewis's view of fact/reality was evolving. He was now beginning "seriously to question certain materialist assumptions" (Payne 108). It had occurred to

him, for example, that there might be something more to a tree than its material substance, "some indwelling spirit behind the matter of the tree" (*Greeves* 29 May 1918, 217), and he was now wondering if the idea of the Dryad was more true than a purely material approach to nature (Payne 108). To say that Lewis became an idealist is no small thing. The move from atheism to idealism was no less than a recognition of the existence of spiritual reality:

> You see the conviction is gaining ground on me that after all Spirit does exist [ . . . . ] I fancy that there is Something right outside time and place, which did not create matter as the Christians say, but is matter's great enemy: and that Beauty is the call of the spirit in that something to the spirit in us. You see how frankly I admit that my views have changed [ . . . . ] (*Greeves* 29 May 1918, 217)

And his views would change again. He would eventually be brought from this "form of philosophical idealism (belief in 'Absolute Spirit') to a supernatural knowledge of a personal God–of a Real Presence" (Payne 14).

The third phase of Lewis's intellectual development also first appears in a letter to Arthur Greeves. At the time of his conversion, Lewis wrote that

> the story of Christ is simply a true myth: a myth working on us in the same way as others, but with this tremendous difference that it *really happened* [ . . . ] the Pagan stories are God expressing Himself through the minds of poets, using such images as He found there, while Christianity is God expressing Himself through what we call 'real things.' (18 October 1931,

427)

Here one sees a Lewis who makes distinctions between myth and history, between imaginative stories and real events/objects/people. He goes on to note a correspondence between this reality and sensory perception: "it is *true*, not in the sense of being a 'description' of God (that no finite mind could take in) but in the sense of being the way in which God chooses to (or can) appear to our faculties" (427-28). So that people may have some limited understanding of God, He chooses to appear to us in the world of "real things" where our senses can perceive His appearance.

The view of reality which the third Lewis–the Christian Lewis–held will be identified later in this chapter as sacramental. If Lewis came to this view at his conversion, it is nevertheless likely that he did not immediately develop a complete system of ideas about sacramental reality. If his writings are an indication of his thought life, the nature and epistemological significance of reality came to the forefront of Lewis's concern in the late thirties through mid-forties. The issue of "reality" dominates his texts in this period.

The epistemological significance of a focus on reality is clear in *Out of the Silent Planet* which was published in 1938. It serves as an example in Lewis's imaginative literature of his emphasis on fact or reality as a corrective for false beliefs and fear. Dr. Elwin Ransom, a philologist, is on vacation when he is kidnapped by Devine and Weston and taken to Malacandra (Mars). Ransom overhears that they have kidnapped him because they believe the *sorns* (a Malacandrian intelligent species) want a human sacrifice for their god. Upon arrival, Ransom manages to escape from his captors,

running away in a panic across the strange Malacandrian landscape.

In his wanderings, Ransom stumbles across another intelligent species, the *hrossa* (which look like giant seals). From them he learns the Malacandrian language and something of its history. He learns that the great canals of Malacandra are the only habitable part of the planet. He learns that there is a third intelligent species, the *pfifltriggi* (they are makers, the *seroni* [plural of sorn] thinkers, and the *hrossa* poets), and that there is a fourth kind of creature, the *eldila*, not animal at all. One of these incorporeal beings, an *eldil,* comes to the *hrossa* and tells them that Ransom must go to the *Oyarsa*. Ransom hears the *eldil* speak but, unlike the natives, cannot see it.

After a brief encounter with Weston and Devine which leaves a hross friend dead, Ransom is sent to Meldilorn where members of all three species of the planet and many eldila have gathered at the seat of Oyarsa, who Ransom learns is also an eldil, but a ruling one. Ransom learns that every planet in the solar system is ruled by such a spiritual creature, including Earth, called *Thulcandra* in Malacandrian, which translates into the "Silent Planet." Oyarsa tells Ransom that the Oyarsa of Thulcandra/Earth, the "Bent One" who disobeyed Maleldil the Young (the ruler of the eldila), has been bound within the sphere of his moon's orbit and cannot roam freely about the heavens. The Earth, therefore, is cut off from the other planets and silent, because many years ago the Bent One struck out at Malacandra and almost destroyed it.

*Oyarsa* asks Ransom why he did not come to him before, and Ransom explains Devine's and Weston's designs on him. These two are soon brought before Oyarsa by a hrossa hunting party and made to explain themselves. They do not, however, see Oyarsa

and believe that an old hross is a medicine man for these primitive peoples, tossing his voice into the air like a ventriloquist. Weston tries to explain his ideal of the survival of the human species through conquest of the galaxy. He loves human life and wishes to see it continue forever, even if that means destroying other sentient creatures so that humanity can survive. Weston, however, proves to be ridiculous because of his poor grasp of the Malacandrian language and his insistence that the old hross is actually speaking to him.

Oyarsa realizes that each of these men, Ransom included, is bent in his own way and demands that they leave at once. He gives them the exact amount of time they need to return home and warns that their ship will then be destroyed. The trio return safely to Earth, and the ship disintegrates as promised.

*Out of the Silent Planet* is largely the story of Ransom's learning to overcome fear through the revitalization of his imagination. This can only occur, however, by his exposure to the facts of reality. The first evidence of his misinformed view occurs in chapter five where he learns that he is to be given to the Seroni. His reaction is one of terror:

> He saw in imagination various incompatible monstrosities–bulbous eyes, grinning jaws, horns, stings, mandibles. Loathing of insects, loathing of snakes, loathing of things that squashed and squelched, all played their horrible symphonies over his nerves. But the reality would be worse: it would be an extra-terrestrial Otherness–something one had never thought of, never could have thought of. In that moment Ransom made a decision. He could face death, but not the *sorns*. (35)

Just why Ransom is so terrified, where the images he has conjured up come from, is explained a few lines above this text: "He had read his H. G. Wells and others. His universe was peopled with horrors such as ancient and mediaeval mythology could hardly rival." Ransom's view of reality is false, based on fictional ideas and images–supposals of what life on other worlds must be like based on a naturalistic world view of the universe.

Ransom's first moment of rehabilitation occurs when he sees the Malacandrian landscape and realizes unexpectedly that it is beautiful. It strikes him as unusual that the thought had never occurred to him that he might encounter beauty here: "The same peculiar *twist of imagination* which led him to people the universe with monsters had somehow taught him to expect nothing on a strange planet except rocky desolation or else a network of nightmare machines" (42 emphasis added). It does not at first help, however, for Ransom next sees seroni for the first time and, though he finds them "quite unlike the horrors his imagination had conjured up," they nevertheless appeal to "an earlier, almost infantile, complex of fears. Giants–ogres–ghosts–skeletons: those were its key words" (47).

Ransom's fleeing the seroni and meeting his first hross begins his first real imaginative transformation. It happens because he realizes that the creature is speaking. As a philologist, he is swept away:

> it flashed upon him like a revelation. The love of knowledge is a kind of madness. In the fraction of a second which it took Ransom to decide that the creature was really talking, and while he still knew that he might be

> facing instant death, his imagination had leaped over every fear and hope and probability of his situation to follow the dazzling project of making a Malacandrian grammar. *An Introduction to the Malacandrian language–The Lunar verb–A Concise Martian-English Dictionary* [ . . . ] the titles flitted through his mind. And what might one not discover from the speech of a non-human race? The very form of language itself, the principle behind all possible languages, might fall into his hands. (55)

The image of heroic discovery coupled with his experience of reality as it *is* allows Ransom to correctly envision the world around him. Ransom learns to love the hrossa as a noble species. He is more reluctant with the seroni, but even his vision of them is restored by his exposure to fact:

> The grace of their movement, their lofty stature, and the softened glancing of the sunlight on their feathery sides, effected a final transformation in Ransom's feelings towards their race. 'Ogres' he had called them when they first met his eyes [ . . . ]; 'Titans' or 'Angels' he now thought would have been a better word. (101)

By the time Ransom comes to confront Oyarsa, his "old terrors of meeting some monster or idol had quite left him" (118). There he admits that his problem on that world has been one of fear, and this fear had been evoked by imaginings which did not correspond to the real: "I was in terrible fear. The tellers of tales in our world make us think that if there is any life beyond our own air it is evil" (121). The Oyarsa agrees with Ransom's self analysis, telling him that he will be ready to go to God "when you have

grown a little braver" (123). This is the essence of his journey, as Oyarsa explains: "You are guilty of no evil, Ransom of Thulcandra, except a little fearfulness. For that, the journey you go on is your pain, and perhaps your cure: for you must be either mad or brave before it is ended" (142).

Ransom returns home to discover that he has overcome much of his fear through an experiential (i.e. exposure to reality) rehabilitation of his imagination. The emphasis on fact in the novel shows that Lewis's epistemology is grounded in reality; if one would know truly, one must know the facts. Where many critics focus on Lewis's epistemology as concerned with knowing truth, this and subsequent chapters reveal that, for Lewis, it is very much about knowing reality.

In the late thirties and throughout the forties, Lewis the Christian (the third Lewis) strove to systematize his views of fact and reality. He hints at doing so in *Silent Planet*. He does so more directly in *The Problem of Pain* (1940), *The Abolition of Man* (1943), "Myth Became Fact" (1944), and most thoroughly in *Mere Christianity* (1941-44) and *Miracles* (1947).

*The Problem of Pain* begins with the atheist's view of the universe as a place of horror and pain, barely capable of supporting life (13-14). The Christian response to this view as a reason for doubting the existence of God is, first of all, to agree. The universe seems a terrible place. But if so, Lewis asks, then "how on earth did human beings ever come to attribute it [the universe] to the activity of a wise and good Creator?" (15). The universe as humanity experiences it can never have been the cause for religious beliefs. Such belief must have arisen from another source. Lewis considers the problem of pain

by first embracing its reality. What follows is an argument based on the facts of physical existence. Rather than glossing over the difficulties which the universe presents, Lewis argues that the Christian system is the only one which embraces all the facts.

Lewis makes his methodology clear. If one looks at the "facts of experience" from the atheist's point of view (21), there is no explanation for the rise of a moral impulse, nor especially for the human reaction of awe toward the universe, what Lewis calls the "Numinous" (20). There is no logical connection between those experiences which cause physical fear and those which produce dread and awe. The experience of the numinous is a "sheer jump" which could never be produced by the "physical facts and logical deductions from them" (20). Here is a clear example of Lewis's fact-based approach to argument. One looks at the facts and then makes logical deductions from them. What he concludes is that, since there are no facts in nature that can explain the fact that human beings experience awe, there must be "a direct experience of the really supernatural, to which the name Revelation might properly be given" (20-21). The general principle being applied here is, as noted above, argument by deduction which considers *all* the facts. Lewis's subsequent explanation of the problem of pain, then, proceeds from the facts of reality.

As with *The Problem of Pain*, Lewis's interest in fact/reality is prevalent in *The Abolition of Man* (1943), which begins with Lewis's argument against two textbook authors (whom he names Gaius and Titius) who deny that evaluative statements are about anything other than the speaker's state of mind. What Lewis takes up is a description of nature as qualitative (not merely quantitative):

> Until quite modern times all teachers and even all men believed the universe to be such that certain emotional reactions on our part could be either congruous or incongruous to it–believed, in fact, that objects did not merely receive, but could *merit*, our approval or disapproval, our reverence, or our contempt. The reason why Coleridge agreed with the tourist who called the cataract sublime and disagreed with the one who called it pretty was of course that he believed inanimate nature to be such that certain responses could be more 'just' or 'ordinate' or 'appropriate' to it than others. And he believed (correctly) that the tourist thought the same. The man who called the cataract sublime was not intending simply to describe his own emotions about it: he was also claiming that the object was one which *merited* those emotions . . . . (25)

Lewis is carefully building an argument about the nature of Nature, not just human reaction to it. By the book's end he shows that nature *itself* is a vast tapestry of meanings, significant apart from any human perceptions of them.

The Chinese, says Lewis, "speak of a great thing (the greatest thing) called the *Tao*. It is the reality beyond all predicates" (28). Synonyms from sources throughout the ages (Platonic, Aristotelian, Stoic, Christian, Oriental), include Nature, the Way, the Road, and the Law (28), as well as Natural Law, Traditional Morality, First Principles of Practical Reason, and first Platitudes (56). Lewis chooses the word *Tao* for simplicity, and to divorce the concept from any accusation of his particular Christian bias. Lewis is not arguing a mere universal system of rules for moral behavior. The *Tao* is "the doctrine

of objective value, the belief that certain *attitudes* are really true, and others really false, to the kind of thing the universe is and the kind of things we are" (29 emphasis added).

Lewis rejects the idea of Gaius and Titius that "the world of facts" should be without "one trace of value, and the world of feelings without one trace of truth or falsehood" (30). At the same time he seems to contradict himself when he rejects any attempt to "base value on fact" (49*n*). What he is rejecting is the idea that quantitative facts about human instinct can yield qualitative values (49). But if the facts of reality demand certain emotional responses, how do they do so? Specifically, how does one know what the emotional responses are supposed to be? Lewis's answer involves the concept of self-evident truth.

Lewis argues that values cannot be determined from fact or instinct (52). Where can they be found? Only in the *Tao*, which must be accepted "without question as being to the world of action what axioms are to the world of theory" (53). The values that make up the *Tao* are not conclusions but premises. They cannot be proven by reason; they are "rationality itself"–things so obvious that they neither demand nor admit proof. After all, "If nothing is self-evident, nothing can be proved" (53).

Toward the end of *Abolition*, Lewis turns specifically to attacking the kind of scientism which strips nature of quality, reducing it to quantity. He begins by defining the natural as the "opposite of the Artificial, the Civil, the Human, the Spiritual and the Supernatural" (81). Setting the artificial aside, he offers the following definition of nature:

> Nature seems to be the spatial and temporal, as distinct from what

> is less fully so or not so at all. She seems to be the world of quantity, as against the world of quality: of objects as against consciousness: of the bound as against the wholly or partially autonomous: of that which knows no values as against that which both has and perceives value: of efficient causes (or, in some modern systems, of no causality at all) as against final causes. (81)

Lewis then immediately begins poking holes in the absoluteness of this view, looking in several places to conjoin the pairs of opposites.

In the model of modern scientism, which, Lewis argues, seeks to analyze not for the sake of knowing but for the sake of gaining control, a thing is reduced "to the level of 'Nature' in the sense that we suspend our judgments about it, ignore its final cause (if any), and treat it in terms of quantity" (81). In so doing, we reduce the things of nature to objects without meaning. Trees are neither Dryads nor beautiful objects in themselves; they are merely beams for a house. The stars lose their divinity with astronomy and "the Dying God has no place in chemical agriculture" (82). Some would argue that all that has happened is that we have begun to see the world as it really is. Only "small" scientists and unscientific followers of science think so. But the "great minds know very well that the object, so treated, is an artificial abstraction, that something of its reality has been lost" (82). Thus Lewis argues that quality, that meaning, is part of true nature, and if quality, then consciousness, autonomy, value, and final cause are also to be viewed as in some way aspects of nature.

Lewis concludes that the only true understanding of nature and of man is within

the *Tao*:

> In the *Tao* itself, as long as we remain within it, we find the concrete reality in which to participate is to be truly human. [ . . . ] While we speak from within the *Tao* we can speak of Man having power over himself in a sense truly analogous to an individual's self-control. But the moment we step outside and regard the *Tao* as a mere subjective product, this possibility has disappeared. ( 86)

Concrete reality is reality alive with meaning, responsive to mind.

From 1941 to 1944, Lewis delivered a series of talks over the BBC in which he defended and promoted what he would later call "mere Christianity." These series of talks (after subsequent publication) were later revised, combined, and republished as *Mere Christianity*.[4] In these four "books" Lewis's system of fact and reality becomes more complete.

The first part of *Mere Christianity* takes us to the *Tao* of *Abolition*. The inborn law of right and wrong in each person "used to be called the Law of Nature" (4), thus called "because people thought that everyone knew it by nature and did not need to be taught it" (5). It is a given, based not on individual or cultural opinion; it is a "real Right and Wrong" (6). And well known about the Law of Nature are "two facts": that people know the Law of Right and Wrong and they cannot obey it (6-7). From these truths, Lewis argues toward the existence of a Law Giver and humanity's guilt before Him.

So that his audience is not confused by the term Law of Nature, Lewis distinguishes between the modern use of the phrase and his own:

> It follows that what we usually call the laws of nature–the way weather works on a tree for example–may not really be *laws* in the strict sense, but only in a manner of speaking. When you say that falling stones always obey the law of gravitation, is not this much the same as saying that the law only means "what stones always do"? You do not really think that when a stone is let go, it suddenly remembers that it is under orders to fall to the ground. [ . . . ] But if you turn to the Law of Human Nature, the Law of Decent Behaviour, it is a different matter. That law certainly does not mean "what human beings, in fact, do"; for as I said before, many of them do not obey this law at all, and none of them obey it completely. The law of gravity tells you what stones do if you drop them; but the Law of Human Nature tells you what human beings ought to do and do not. In other words, when you are dealing with humans, something else comes in above and beyond the actual facts. You have the facts (how men do behave) and you also have something else (how they ought to behave). (14)

The Moral Law or Law of Nature is now called the Law of Human Nature for the sake of distinction. More important, though, is the distinction between two kinds of facts. The Moral law "is not simply a fact about human behaviour in the same way as the Law of Gravitation is, or may be, simply a fact about how heavy objects behave" (16). By introducing the word "ought" into the discussion, Lewis calls up the distinction between prescription and description. The Law of Nature describes how things are; the Law of

Human Nature prescribes how things ought to be. And the *facts* of human behavior (the descriptions) frequently oppose the *fact* of how people ought to behave.

Lewis's discussion of reality now shifts to an emphasis on its hierarchical complexity. That there might be multiple levels of reality is first suggested by the idea of descriptive versus prescriptive fact as seen above. Lewis moves from mere suggestion to carefully reasoned statement when he contrasts the materialist and religious views of nature (18-19). According to the latter, there is "Something Behind" nature, a reality which cannot be observed in the facts of physical nature and about which one can only learn something by observing human nature (20): "Or put it the other way round. If there was a controlling power outside the universe, it could not show itself to us as one of the facts inside the universe–no more than the architect of a house could actually be a wall or staircase or fire place in that house" (21). The controlling power could only show itself inside people, influencing them to behave a certain way, and this is exactly what is happening in the Moral Law.

What follows is to consider what the thing behind the universe might be. Lewis concludes that, of the two things we know, mind and matter, the reality behind must be more like mind than matter since "you can hardly imagine a bit of matter giving instructions" (22), and, as he has already pointed out, "the Being behind the universe is intensely interested in right conduct" (25). Lewis rejects those views midway between materialism and religion that attempt to call the 'thing behind' names like "Life-Force," or "Emergent Evolution." These attempt to argue in favor of a materialist view while using the language of mind and are simply self-contradictory (22).

Next, Lewis refuses Pantheism, the view "that the universe almost *is* God" (33). He specifically argues two realities: "God is separate from the world" (33); He is "the Being outside the world" who made it and is "infinitely different from anything else" (44). Natural life (*bios*) mirrors God, is a "kind of symbol or shadow of" Him (135), but it lacks "Spiritual life [*zoe*]–the higher and different sort of life that exists in God" (136). As in *Abolition*, Lewis's great conclusion in *Mere Christianity* about the nature of reality, of fact, is that God is the "rock bottom, irreducible Fact on which all other facts depend" (157). The duality is plain: there is the one Fact of Being, and then there are those facts created by Him, utterly dependent upon Him for their own being.

The essay "Myth Became Fact" was published in Fall 1944. It is impossible to discuss "fact" in this article without also discussing "truth" and "myth." First Lewis makes a connection between "myth" and "reality" and a separation of "reality" from "truth": "What flows into you from the myth is not truth but reality (truth is always *about* something, but reality is that *about which* truth is )" (66). Reality (or fact) is what is; truth is a proposition about fact. The connection between myth and reality will be explored in chapter four, but one can see from this passage that myth is a vehicle for reality. A little later in the paragraph Lewis notes that myth is not "like direct experience" and in the following paragraph he asserts that myth "comes down from the heaven of legend and imagination to the earth of history" (66). Myth serves as a bridge across the chasm separating heaven from earth.

Next, Lewis describes reality as a "valley of separation" (66*n*). He suggests, "Myth is the mountain whence all the different streams arise which become truths down

here in the valley; *in hac valle abstractionis*" (66). What is Lewis saying about reality in this metaphor? One can at least say that he is creating a hierarchy. There are levels, but levels of what? His next metaphor helps: ". . . if you prefer, myth is the isthmus which connects the peninsular world of thought with that vast continent we really belong to" (66). In isolation, this metaphor suggests three levels or worlds: a world of thought, the reality we know by experience (the concrete world), and a tiny isthmus that connects the first two–an isthmus called myth. This image suggests the following hierarchy:

Thought
|
Myth
|
Reality

But this cannot be right; the metaphor cannot be viewed in isolation. Though the isthmus image connects a world above to a world below, the mountain metaphor quoted earlier makes myth the top level from which streams of truth flow:

Myth
|
Truth

But previous to these metaphors Lewis says that what flows from myth is not truth but reality!

Myth
|
Reality
( | )?
Truth

And to make matters more complicated, Lewis adds another paragraph:

> Now as myth transcends thought, Incarnation transcends myth.

> The heart of Christianity is a myth which is also a fact. The old myth of the Dying God, *without ceasing to be a myth*, comes down from the heaven of legend and imagination to the earth of history. It *happens*–at a particular date, in a particular place, followed by definable historical consequences. (66)

And on the next page Lewis adds, "For this is the marriage of heaven and earth: Perfect Myth and Perfect Fact . . ." (67).

In the first line of the new paragraph myth transcends thought. So, again, there is this hierarchy of Myth over Thought. But in the very same sentence Lewis asserts that Incarnation transcends myth, and the key to Incarnation is the myth of the Dying God becoming fact or reality. So should reality be elevated above myth? Almost. Incarnation is what happens when earthly reality and heavenly myth merge into what will be later called 'higher reality.' This may provide a clue to the problem of levels, or hierarchy, in reality. Higher reality flows from myth into lower reality. The mountain of myth produces streams that become truth in the valley of this lower reality in which people live. Myth is also an isthmus connecting the peninsula of thought with the continent of human experience. And there is myth transcending thought and Incarnation transcending myth. Recall that in *Mere Christianity* Lewis suggests there are different kinds of reality: the descriptive facts and the prescriptive ones (14-19). Perhaps "Myth Became Fact" is here revealing kinds of interconnected realities: the concrete reality we experience, the cognitive experience of making abstract statements of truth about concrete reality, the experiencing of prescriptive moral statements about what reality ought to be that we find

ourselves believing (The Moral Law of *Mere*), and the experience of a transcendent something (higher reality) in mythic stories, one of which–the Incarnation–became factually real. The eventual conclusion is that Lewis envisioned a model of reality that is both modal and hierarchical. He describes such a vision in *The Last Battle*, where every level of reality leads to another that is both "further up and further in" (201), in which the inner realities are, paradoxically, larger and more encompassing than the outer realities.

A glimpse of one possible higher reality is available in *The Great Divorce*, which Lewis began writing in April 1944. Two passages are pertinent. In the first, a "white spirit" explains to an intellectual ghost that he intends to take him to see "Eternal Fact, the Father of all other facthood" (44). In the second instance, the heavenly figure of George MacDonald–a nineteenth century author who, according to Lewis, baptized his imagination–explains to the Lewis persona in the book that, although hell is a state of mind, heaven is not: "Heaven is reality itself" (69). Here is a slight problem. If God is ultimate fact, then isn't He reality itself? But if the language is figurative, then there is room for interpretation. Perhaps the true meaning of the claim, "heaven is reality itself" is: "All that is fully real is Heavenly" (69). Maybe heaven is meant as an adjective. Or, perhaps, Lewis is making a spiritual, a mystical connection between God, heaven, and reality–the idea that out of God's defining Himself as the "I Am" to Moses (Exodus 3.14) one can conclude that God is Being and all other being (heaven, reality, fact) has its origins in the fulness and "reality" of God.

*Miracles* contains Lewis's most comprehensive approach to fact. Although not published until 1947, Lewis began writing it in 1943 and completed it in 1945 (Hooper *C.*

*S. Lewis* 344). Honda argues that "In all his writings, not only apologetics but literary criticisms and fiction as well, his main concern is the absolute and eternal Reality" (69).[5] Lewis's focus on reality–eternal and created–is central to understanding his epistemology. From the outset, *Miracles* is not as much about miracles as it is about discerning the ultimate nature of reality.

From the beginning of the book, Lewis attempts to define nature. He starts with two views, those of the Naturalist and the Supernaturalist. Of the first he says, "What the Naturalist believes is that the ultimate Fact, the thing you can't go behind, is a vast process of space and time which is *going on of its own accord*" (14). Then the Supernaturalist:

> The Supernaturalist agrees with the Naturalist that there must be something which exists in its own right; some basic Fact whose existence it would be nonsensical to try to explain because this Fact is itself the ground or starting-point of all explanations. But he does not identify this Fact with "the whole show." He thinks that things fall into two classes. In the first class we find either things or (more probably) One Thing which is basic and original, which exists on its own. In the second we find things which are merely derivative from that One Thing. The one basic Thing has caused all the other things to be. It exists on its own; they exist because it exists. They will cease to exist if it ever ceases to maintain them in existence; they will be altered if it ever alters them. (15)

What follows, then, is a search for the "basic, original, self-existent Fact" (43) that is

either nature or something behind nature.

Lewis proceeds in favor of the "something behind nature," the supernatural, which he claims to be "the most basic of all Facts" (57). He claims that "Nature is a creature, a created thing" which is falsely taken "for the ultimate self-existent Fact" (87). Then he attempts to define what the supernatural something behind nature is. It is "an uncreated and unconditioned reality" (105). Some would say it "is not a concrete reality," that it "is not a concrete Being but 'being in general' about which nothing can be truly asserted" (115). This is unacceptable when considering that created reality is not "mere principles or generalities or theorems, but things–facts–real, resistant existences" (115). One can deduce laws from these "things"–patterns, predictions, and qualities–but they themselves are "opaque existences," that is, they possess a reality which human intelligence cannot reduce to mere abstraction. If the "Something" behind nature were abstract being in general, it could not produce concrete reality: "Book-keeping, continued to all eternity, could never produce one farthing" (116).

If anything concrete is to exist, then the "Original Thing" must be "an utterly concrete fact." God is the particular Original Thing. He is not "universal being" in the abstract, but "*the* Absolute Being" (116). When He proclaims "I Am," He is "proclaiming the mystery of self-existence" (117), and when He says, "I am the Lord," He is saying He is "the ultimate Fact," and "the opaque centre of all existences, the thing that simply and entirely *is*, the fountain of facthood" (117). Because He so utterly and completely exists, "He can give existence away, can cause things to be, and to be really other than Himself" (118). Through the rest of *Miracles*, Lewis calls God "basic Fact or

Actuality, the source of all other facthood" (121); "the ultimate fact [ . . . ] not an abstraction but the living God, opaque by the very fulness of His blinding actuality" (126); and "eternal self-existent Spirit, basic Fact-hood" (146).

Finally, then, there are some hints at the concept of modes of reality as discussed in "Myth Became Fact" and *Mere Christianity*. But *Miracles* suggests yet another mode of reality when Lewis takes up the problem of the ascension of Christ. The literalist notion that the disciples believed Christ to be flying up to a heaven in the sky sounds superstitious and primitive (206). But this is to read the disciples' perceptions wrong. The sharp distinction modern man makes between the metaphorical and the literal did not arise until the Middle Ages to the seventeenth century (207). The ancients saw heaven in the blue sky above them, but they also understood the spiritual nature of a heaven above: "They never thought merely of the blue sky or merely of a 'spiritual' heaven" (207). When the disciples saw Christ ascend, the perception was for them simultaneously physical and spiritual. What they observed was both metaphorical and literal. Thus, Lewis is saying that in earthly reality, in human experience, there appear to be instances where metaphor and fact, the symbolic and the literal, are not as distinct as they are usually made out to be. The mode of existence that Lewis is here suggesting is one in which metaphor has concrete reality.

What follows between *Miracles* and the end of Lewis's life are briefer references to fact and reality, some of which carry ideas in previous texts forward, others of which shed new light on his views. And some of these references fit the view of the third, the Christian, Lewis, whereas others suggest the possibility of an evolving view toward

reality. Before turning to this possibility, however, one last text which clearly conforms to the thinking of the "third" Lewis needs to be considered.

According to Walter Hooper, *Surprised by Joy* was begun in 1948 and sent for publication in early 1955 (*Guide* 186). In this book Lewis says he "never mistook imagination for reality" (82). And in reminiscing about his father he notes that the man seldom got the facts of anything straight, but when he did "the truth fared none the better for that. What are facts without interpretation?" (121). The separation between fact and interpretation is important to the epistemological question (see chapter five). As Colin Duriez summarizes,

> For many people, the existence of the material world is proved by kicking a stone. But it is generally accepted by less naive reflection that there is an interpretative dimension to all facts–there may be an intellectual, imaginative, or perceptual element in a fact, or indeed all these elements at a time–even when the stone you kick is real. There is, in other words, a subjective, personal element in objectivity. (*C. S. Lewis* 136)

This well summarizes the epistemology-of-fact of the third Lewis.

Chapter one introduced the problem of epistemology in the triple enigma. This issue was illustrated by looking at the epistemological context of "Myth Became Fact." The problem of thinking versus experiencing which was raised in chapter one is mentioned in *Surprised by Joy*. After reading a book by Samuel Alexander called *Space, Time, and Deity*, Lewis came to understand that there is a difference between what

Alexander called "Enjoyment" and "Contemplation," or between what Lewis terms experiencing a thing and thinking about it (*Surprised* 217). These two cannot be done simultaneously. So, for example, "You cannot hope and also think about hoping at the same moment; for in hope we look to hope's object and we interrupt this by (so to speak) turning round to look at the hope itself" (218). Note the distinction where fact represents the objective "out there" and experience is the subjective self's encounter with fact. What matters to Lewis is that we understand that when we are experiencing the 'real,' when we are experiencing, for example, "love" we are not simultaneously thinking about love. If we want to contemplate reality, we must first stop experiencing it and then turn our minds to thinking *about* what we have experienced. The epistemological implications of this understanding will be considered throughout the remainder of the study.

The distinction between contemplation and experience helped Lewis understand that his life-long quest for the ecstatic experience of the numinous and the beautiful, what he called Joy, was misguided. At first, he had mistaken those objects that produced Joy, such as mythic literature or the hills near his boyhood home, as the things for which he longed. Later he realized, upon contemplating these experiences, that Joy itself was not what he longed for but rather that Joy was itself the desiring of something that, "quite clearly, was no state of my own mind or body at all" (220). This realization drew him out of his own subjective self to focus on an object wholly *other* that, "by refusing to identify itself with any object of the senses, or anything where of we have biological or social need, or anything imagined, or any state of our own minds, proclaims itself sheerly

objective" (221). This utterly "other" object matches the description of God Lewis used earlier: Ultimate Fact. Through Joy Lewis made his way to "the naked Other, imageless (though our imagination salutes it with a hundred images), unknown, undefined, desired" (221). What matters most, in terms of fact, in this last passage is Lewis's recognition that there is a Fact that is completely separate from himself.

Some later Lewis texts demand that one consider the possibility of a "fourth Lewis-of-fact." Did his definitions of fact and reality change as some of his later works may suggest? Specifically, did Lewis continue to believe in objective reality? This latter question will be answered in the affirmative. But more problematic is the epistemological question: did Lewis come to doubt mankind's ability to know reality?

The exploration begins with Lewis's last novel, *Till We Have Faces* (written in 1955). Part of what draws the reader to wondering whether Lewis's views changed is the mysteriousness, the ambiguity of this novel. Orual, the protagonist, is caught between competing views of reality. One of these views is represented by the Fox, a Greek slave brought to the kingdom of Glome by the King to become his daughters' tutor.

The Fox's view of nature is the stoic view (Schakel *Reason and Imagination* 18), and it is represented throughout the novel till after the Fox's death when, in the afterlife, his view radically alters! But early on, after telling Orual the story of Aphrodite and Anchises, the Fox is quick to deny the existence of such things: "'Not that this ever really happened,'" the Fox said in haste. "'It's only lies of poets, lies of poets child'" (*Till We Have Faces* 8). He denies the existence of both the gods and the afterlife: "At death we are resolved into our elements" (17).

A second view of nature with which Orual occasionally flirts is that represented in the attitudes of Bardia, the captain of the palace guards and Orual's close advisor (second only to the Fox) after she becomes Queen. Though he believes in the gods, his attitude is one of avoidance: "the less Bardia meddles with the gods, the less they'll meddle with Bardia" (135).

The third view of reality in the novel is represented by Orual's sister Psyche. In this view the supernatural is real and benevolent. It is the view Orual eventually accepts. In the novel, Psyche is chosen as a sacrifice to the "Shadowbrute," the god of the mountain. Her only fear is that there may be no god and she will only waste away and slowly die, tied there to the tree of sacrifice. But she determines to believe. She is convinced that "the Fox hasn't the whole truth" (70), and she is equally sure that Orual's view "that the gods are real, and viler than the vilest men" (71) is untrue. Regarding the evils the gods apparently do, Psyche says, perhaps "they are real gods but don't really do these things. Or even–mightn't it be–they do these things and the things are not what they seem to be? How if I am indeed to wed a god?" (71). Notice Psyche's embrace of the mystery. But Orual will have none of it. She is convinced Psyche will be food for a beast, or worse:

> "I see," said Psyche in a low voice. "You think it devours the offering. I mostly think so myself. Anyway, it means death. Orual, you didn't think I was such a child as not to know that? How can I be the ransom for all Glome unless I die? And if I am to go to the god, of course it must be through death. That way, even what is strangest in the holy

> sayings might be true. To be eaten and to be married to the god might not be so different. We don't understand. There must be so much that neither the Priest nor the Fox knows." (72)

Life comes from death, marriage from being devoured, and no explanation is offered save that Psyche chooses to believe. Here is a view of reality as mystery, and it is such passages, their very tone if not their specific propositions, that make one wonder if the clear and rational Lewis of *Abolition*, *Mere*, and *Miracles* is the same Lewis a decade later. Psyche, at least, looks forward to her death with the longing of a lover (74).

Intending to retrieve Psyche's bones for burial after the sacrifice, Orual ascends the sacred mountain only to find her sister safe and well in the valley (the god's valley) on the other side. Psyche tells Orual the story of her lover the god, how he took her in a wind to his palace. Orual is stunned: "'Psyche,' said I, leaping up, 'I can't bear this any longer. You have told me so many wonders. If this is all true, I've been wrong all my life. Everything has to be begun over again. Psyche, it is true? You're not playing a game with me? Show me. Show me your palace'" (115).

But Psyche is, in turn, dumbfounded, for they are in her palace and Orual cannot see it. Nor can she see fine clothing on her sister, only rags. They try to convince each other that the reality the other sees is false. Psyche's self assurance is so complete that Orual almost believes her, thinking: "There might be a hundred things in it that I could not see" (120). But then, when Psyche mentions her lover, the god, the master of her house, Orual refuses to believe, convinced that the "whole thing must be madness" (122).

Orual spends that night in the valley but away from Psyche. The next morning

she awakens to twilight and mist. She goes to the river and kneels for a drink; when she looks up into the mist across the river, she sees "the palace, grey–as all things were grey in that hour and place–but solid and motionless, wall within wall, pillar and arch and architrave, acres of it, a labyrinthine beauty" (132). She knows she must go to Psyche and ask both her forgiveness and the god's, that is, assuming what she is witnessing is real. As she stares at the palace, doubt takes hold: "Perhaps it was not real. I looked and looked to see if it would not fade or change. Then as I rose (for all this time I was still kneeling where I had drunk), almost before I stood on my feet, the whole thing was vanished" (133). Orual immediately turns to blame: how could the gods make riddles and play games; how could they expect her to believe, in her state of distress and exhaustion, in what she *might* have seen "gazing at a mist in a half-light?" (134). She accuses the gods of mocking her and demands that if "they had an honest intention to guide us, why is their guidance not plain?" (134).

The emphasis on her position and attitude explains why her sight changes. She does not lose sight of the palace until she chooses to doubt its existence, nor does she lose sight of it until she stands. Lewis emphasizes her kneeling position to show that humility is a key to perception. The other key is faith. The significance in relation to knowing reality is in the subjective perception of the observer. Doubt is cast as to whether people can see reality clearly, objectively.

Orual threatens to kill herself if Psyche will not disobey her god-husband's one rule and look at his face. When Psyche does so, Orual learns the truth when his divine rage fills the valley; and in that moment the god accuses Orual of willful blindness: "He

made it to be as if, from the beginning, I had known that Psyche's lover was a god, and as if all my doubtings, fears, guessings, debatings, questionings of Bardia, questionings of the Fox, all the rummage and business of it, had been trumped-up foolery, dust blown in my own eyes by myself" (173). In Orual's mind the god remakes the story to suit his anger. She makes the same accusation decades later when she hears the story of Psyche told by a priest in a distant land. Only he gets the facts wrong, saying,

> "when her two sisters had seen the beautiful palace and been feasted and given gifts, they –
>
> "They *saw* the palace?" [asks Orual.]
>
> "Stranger, you are hindering the sacred story. Of course they saw the palace. They weren't blind." (243)

It is at this moment that Orual decides to write her book, her accusation against the gods. She claims that they have completely changed the meaning of her actions. It was their riddle of the hidden palace and her love for Psyche that drove her actions, not vain jealousy. They forced her to guess and she guessed wrong. If they had shown the truth clearly, she says, she would have seen. Orual completes her book daring the gods to "answer my charge if they can" (250).

But the book continues. Something has happened to Orual and she must tell more. Book two of *Till We Have Faces* recounts, essentially, Orual's learning that she is the one who has gotten the facts wrong. It begins when she is visited by Tarin, the one-time lover of her sister Redival. He recalls Redival's loneliness, the thought of which surprises Orual. He tells her, "She used to say, 'First of all Orual loved me much; then

the Fox came and she loved me little; then the baby came and she loved me not at all'" (255). Orual is shocked. It had never occurred to her to think how Redival felt when she abandoned her: "For it had been somehow settled in my mind from the very beginning that I was the pitiable and ill-used one" (256).

The next shock comes when Bardia dies and Orual learns how selfishly she had used him. Bardia's widow Ansit tells Orual that she worked him to death (261). Orual first wonders if Ansit is jealous (but how could she be jealous of so ugly a woman) (262). But Ansit persists: "your queenship drank up his blood year by year and ate out his life" (264). She concludes that Orual is "full fed. Gorged with other men's lives, women's too: Bardia's, mine, the Fox's, your sister's–both your sisters'" (265).

Shortly thereafter Orual experiences a vision in which she sees her face in a mirror, and it is the face of Ungit, the dark goddess, mother of the Shadowbrute, she whom Orual has blamed for all her woes, especially the sacrifice of Psyche. In the vision, her father asks, "Who is Ungit?" and she knows: "It was I who was Ungit. That ruinous face was mine. I was [ . . . ] that all devouring womblike, yet barren, thing. Glome was a web–I the swollen spider, squat at its center, gorged with men's stolen lives" (276). Orual had been getting the facts wrong all her life, most especially the facts about her own self.

Just before this vision, however, Orual learns another fact which she had not considered before. At a ritual in the house of Ungit, Orual sees a peasant woman comforted as she prays to the goddess. That the gods might actually be good had never before occurred to her (273). She later learns, in another vision, that the goodness of the

gods may itself explain the terrible, the wrathful, the extreme suffering which human beings experience in interaction with them. In the vision, Orual is trampled by gigantic golden rams, animals filled with divinity. But they do not attack her in anger:

> They rushed over me in their joy [ . . . ] They butted and trampled me because their gladness led them on; the Divine Nature wounds and perhaps destroys us merely by being what it is. We call it the wrath of the gods; as if the great cataract in Phars were angry with every fly it sweeps down in its green thunder.
>
> Yet they did not kill me. When they had gone over me, I lived and knew myself . . . . (284)

For the first time, Orual has come to learn something of the nature of the Divine, and these facts teach her more about who she really is.

She cannot completely know herself, though, until she is stripped utterly of all the facades that she has hidden behind. This happens in yet another vision where she is called to accuse the gods, and, rather than read the book she has written, she pours out her inner-most self. When the judge asks her, "Are you answered?" (293), she knows that the complaint *was* the answer. She knows for the first time "why the gods do not speak to us openly, nor let us answer" (294). Until all the lies have been stripped from our hearts, until the real words we mean "can be dug out of us, why should they hear the babble that we think we mean? How can they meet us face to face till we have faces?" (294). Orual finally knows who she is; she is at last ready to face the transforming and salvific accusations which the gods will make against her.

*Till We Have Faces* is a book about seeing reality, including the reality of our own identity, for what it is. Does this book reflect a change in C. S. Lewis's view of reality? No, for Orual must, after all, learn that she is mistaken about the facts. What she believed about nature was wrong and had to be corrected. Nature is not reduced to the place of subjectivity. The Divine Nature is so completely other that it almost destroys by its very proximity. Is Lewis saying that how one comes to know reality is not as simple as taking in the facts and drawing conclusions from them (as was his methodology in the earlier apologetic works)? This seems undeniable. Lewis is saying that one's subjectivity can get in the way of one's ability to know the facts correctly. This possibility will be considered more fully in chapter three's study on Lewis and truth. But is one drawn at this point into having to recognize a fourth Lewis, one who, later in his life, saw the epistemological problem as more complex than he did in his younger years? Not yet. It is still necessary to look at what Lewis said about fact/reality in his absolute latest works, those from just before his death.

*A Grief Observed* was written in 1960 after the death of Lewis's wife, Joy. It is a profoundly different work from *The Problem of Pain*, despite similar subject matter, and so, again, causes one to wonder if one is looking at another Lewis. Whereas *Problem* had been a theological attempt to make objective sense of suffering in the world at large, *Grief* is a very personal confession of one man's subjective experience of pain, though *Grief* certainly makes profound statements about pain with which many who have suffered can identify. However, its purpose, and tone are clearly different from the earlier work. Three passages of *A Grief Observed* are of primary concern for this study.

In the first of these, Lewis notes the difference between the conception of something outside oneself and the experience of the same: "The most precious gift that marriage gave me was this constant impact of something very close and intimate yet all the time unmistakably other, resistant–in a word, real" (30). Here again one sees the problem of knowing, but not necessarily a new Lewis. In *Surprised by Joy* Lewis made this same distinction in relation to that experience he called Joy (219-21). There his point was that what he had been looking for inside himself was utterly and completely other, totally objective. Here he makes the same point about his wife Joy. Every real experience of her presence always contained something more than his mental conception of who she was. Now *Surprised* was written in the late forties to mid-fifties and finished about the same time as *Till We Have Faces*. It fits into a chronological pattern of a possible later Lewis who began to have less confidence in our ability to know; however, the period of life about which Lewis wrote in *Surprised* was his teens through early thirties. That he had faced the quality of something epistemologically transcendent preceded his conversion! At the same time, his use of the idea in *Grief* is not in reference to something mystical but to something human. The person of Joy, his wife, was an object before his daily perception, yet also somehow unknowable. In death, he feared, she would become even more so through the limitations of memory.

Lewis then mentions:

> Today I had to meet a man I haven't seen for ten years. And all that time I had thought I was remembering him well–how he looked and spoke and the sort of things he said. The first five minutes of the real man shattered

> the image completely. Not that he had changed. On the contrary. I kept on thinking 'Yes, of course, of course. I'd forgotten that he thought that–or disliked this, or knew so-and-so–or jerked his head back that way! . . . How can I hope that this will not happen to my memory of H? [ . . . ] The rough, sharp, cleansing tang of her otherness is gone. (31-32)

On the one hand, Joy was unknowable, yet on the other her real presence would make her knowable again–more real than the images we construct out of memory. The contradiction can probably be smoothed over but it is there. It is in the experience of the 'actual presence' of a person that one really knows him (not in our trickster memories) and, at the same time, the utter otherness of that real presence makes knowing incomplete.

To the question of whether or not Lewis started to doubt objective reality, an answer is beginning to emerge. *Grief*, like *Faces* does not doubt reality. It is the realness, the objective otherness of reality that allows one's errors in perception to be corrected. To the second question, of Lewis's loss of epistemological confidence, we will return later.

In the previous quotation notice that Lewis's experience of the "real man shattered the image" Lewis had retained of him. Here reality is clearly a corrective. Later in *Grief* Lewis says, "All reality is iconoclastic. The earthly beloved, even in this life, incessantly triumphs over your mere idea of her. And you want her to; you want her with all her resistances, all her faults, all her unexpectedness. That is, in her foursquare and independent reality" (78). What one fails to retain in imaginative constructs, exposure to

the real can correct. If knowledge is difficult, it is not necessarily impossible. But, again, Lewis looks at those moments of real knowing and says they are resistant, unexpected and independent, and one wonders if he has not shifted some in his epistemological confidence. There is reason to doubt this possibility: the view of reality Lewis expresses in *A Grief Observed* is similar to one he expressed in the *Problem of Pain*. In reference to the story of the Incarnation Lewis writes,

> The story is strangely like many myths which have haunted religion from the first, and yet it is not like them. It is not transparent to the reason: we could not have invented it ourselves. It has not the suspicious *a priori* lucidity of Pantheism or of Newtonian physics. It has the seemingly arbitrary and idiosyncratic character which modern science is slowly teaching us to put up with in this wilful universe [ . . . . ] If any message from the core of reality ever were to reach us, we should expect to find in it just that unexpectedness, that wilful, dramatic anfractuosity which we find in the Christian faith. (*Problem* 25)

The words "resistances" and "unexpectedness" in the *Grief* passage match the concepts of "wilfulness" and "unexpectedness" in *Problem*, and it is not too far a stretch to connect a description of the existential *realness* of one person to the *realness* of reality as a whole. For Lewis, the experience of Joy's (his wife's) reality was like that of reality itself (in *Problem*) or the ecstatic experience (which he called Joy) that calls to mankind through the real (in *Surprised*). Here exists evidence *against* a fourth Lewis.

*Letters to Malcolm* (1963) gives more evidence. In the fifteenth chapter Lewis

considers the subject/object relationship between himself as subject and the reality he sees around him as object. In prayer, this relationship becomes utterly real to him because he knows that God is the root existence for both himself and his environment (79). Indeed, it is by seeing that these things–his image of his self and his conception of the created reality that is open to his perceptions–are not "ultimate realities" that he is able to believe in them as realities at all (80). The idea is that, if God is Ultimate Reality, then the facades the finite, subjective perceiver takes as reality can be more confidently believed in. The key to this paradox is in the reality of the delusion. Lies and dreams present false reality but, once they are known for what they are, only their ability to deceive ceases. They remain real lies and real dreams: "In fact we should never ask of anything "Is it real?," for everything is real. The proper question is "A real *what*?," e.g., a real snake or real *delirium tremens*?" (80). The objects around us or even our own conception of the human self will be lies if taken at face value. But if they are taken as real creations of a higher reality which gives root and form to their insubstantiality, then, and only then, they can meet one another genuinely. One can believe in the reality of one's own self, the reality of the objects around one, and the reality of the subject/object encounter. Created matter and created mind meet one another as "the end-products of divine activity" (80).

Here is a Lewis who believes "that this 'real world' and 'real self' are very far from being rock-bottom realities" (81). But this is not particularly new for Lewis. We have seen previously his idea that God is the Ultimate Fact from Whom all other facthood flows; his idea of levels of reality, the great chain of being; his idea of God as the most

concrete of all realities; and his constant claim that reality is difficult and complex, that there is much that surprises people and is difficult to understand. Even some of Lewis's specific language is not new: his comment about not asking whether something is real but a real what appears much earlier in *The Personal Heresy*. In 1939 Lewis stated, "everything that is real is a real something, although it may not be what it pretends to be. 'What pretends to be a crocodile may be a (real) dream; what pretends at the breakfast-table to be a dream may be a (real) lie'" (qtd. in Lindskoog "Dreams" 143).

Consider this paragraph from *Malcolm*:

> I have called my material surroundings a stage set. A stage set is not a dream nor a nonentity. But if you attack a stage house with a chisel you will not get chips of brick or stone; you'll only get a hole in a piece of canvas and, beyond that, windy darkness. Similarly, if you start investigating the nature of matter, you will not find anything like what imagination has always supposed matter to be. You will get mathematics. (80)

There are a number of parallel passages from earlier Lewis texts that refute any conclusion that Lewis came to doubt our ability to know reality. What Lewis thought in the thirties and forties looks very much like this passage from *Malcolm*. In his 1943 essay "Dogma and the Universe," Lewis writes, "As regards material reality, we are now being forced to the conclusion that we know nothing about it save its mathematics" (46). In *The Problem of Pain* Lewis writes, "We have recently been told by the scientists that we have no right to expect that the real universe should be picturable, and that if we make

mental pictures to illustrate quantum physics we are moving further away from reality, not nearer to it" (86).

Throughout his writings Lewis borrows from the contemporary scientific thinking about reality to demonstrate that there are limitations to knowing it rightly. This becomes common sense when one considers that Lewis wrote many of his own books as correctives. The purpose behind his apologetics and, it can be argued, his fiction as well, was to correct peoples' wrong ideas (and images) about reality. No such works would be needed if reality were not difficult to grasp. But difficult is not the same thing as impossible, and, though Lewis's approach to reality seems to become more subjective, vague, or perhaps imaginative, in later years (and this is the only sense in which one might be persuaded to believe there was a fourth Lewis), he still relies on the corrective of reality itself to constantly draw the reader out of ethereal abstractions or reductive images and into true understanding (see *Abolition* 82). Reality itself must constantly correct our perceptions–whether rational abstractions or imaginative visions–of reality. But one can accept that reality and that objectivity because there is a higher reality, an utterly objective God whose own action gives rise and objectivity to all created reality, including ourselves.

Regarding a fourth C. S. Lewis, one can say that Lewis may have shifted his style, emphasis, and mode of writing to something that seems more subjective (one might be tempted to use adjectives like emotional, personal, even numinous), but his view of reality did not change. Yes reality is difficult to know, but he always thought so. Yes, the subjective observer does affect his own view of the real, but the result is not that

reality changes; rather, the observer fails to see what is really there. And reality itself, especially the Ultimate Reality, is that which intrudes into our thinking to pull us out of error.

III. Levels and Kinds of Reality

Lewis's conception of multiple levels of reality is here explored more fully. The main point of this section is that nature is not all there is. In the essay "De Futilitate," Lewis makes clear that there are only three ways to view the universe: 1) the view of the scientist, 2) the view of the Western Idealist and Oriental Pantheist, and 3) the view of Jews, Muslims, and Christians. Lewis rejects the first view because it does not account for all the facts, and he rejects the second view because it reduces reality to something "not quite real." Lewis abandoned his own brand of idealism (which saw spirit as good and matter as evil) when he became a Christian, thus adopting the third view, "that though Nature is real as far as she goes, still there are other realities" (59).

Lewis's view of reality is at least partially hierarchical, or, as he says in *Miracles*, "monarchical" (15), having something above and something below. Lyle Smith suggests, "The primary hierarchy is that of Creator and creation" ("Hierarchy" 203). Lewis moves quickly away from any flattened naturalist view of reality, whether in his argument of the Moral Law or Law of Nature in *Mere Christianity* or in his natural versus supernatural dichotomy in *Miracles*. Lewis is very clear in stating that nature is not God (*Reflections on the Psalms* 67), that God created nature and is Master over it (*Miracles* 87), that God is outside nature (*Mere Christianity* 44), that nature derives from God (*Miracles* 15), and that God is the "fountain of facthood" (117) and the "source of all other facthood" (121).

He also says that nature is temporary: "Nature is mortal; we shall outlive her" ("Weight of Glory" 17).

Hierarchy is not just a division between God and nature. Though Lewis begins with two levels, he does not stop there. Payne argues that Lewis distinguished physical created nature from immaterial created supernature and both from the uncreated Absolute Reality–God–above all natures (44). Furthermore, Lewis thinks that "[t]here may be Natures piled upon Natures, each supernatural to the one beneath it, before we come to the abyss of pure spirit; and to be in that abyss, at the right hand of the Father, may not mean being absent from any of these Natures–may mean a yet more dynamic presence on all levels" ("Miracles" 35).

In *Mere Christianity* Lewis explicates an aspect of his hierarchical view of reality which he only on touches in other works. Though he refers to Natural Law elsewhere, in *Mere* Lewis not only distinguishes what people do from what they *ought* to do, but suggests that the 'ought' is its own kind of reality. As seen earlier in this chapter, the argument Lewis follows in *Mere* begins with proving two facts: 1) humanity has a universal sense of right and wrong, and 2) human beings cannot live up to such values (7). Next he distinguishes between the laws of Nature and the Law of Human Nature, noting that the former are not laws at all, only descriptions, whereas the latter are prescriptions that define how people ought to behave (as opposed to how they actually behave) (14-16). What follows is the conclusion of multiple realities:

> The Moral Law, or Law of Human Nature, is not simply a fact about human behaviour in the same way as the Law of Gravitation is, or

> may be, simply a fact about how heavy objects behave. On the other hand, it is not a mere fancy, for we cannot get rid of the idea, and most of the things we say and think about men would be reduced to nonsense if we did. [ . . . ] Consequently, this Rule of Right and Wrong, or Law of Human Nature, or whatever you call it, must somehow or other be a real thing–a thing that is really there, not made up by ourselves. And yet it is not a fact in the ordinary sense, in the same way as our actual behaviour is a fact. It begins to look as if we shall have to admit that there is more than one kind of reality . . . . (16-17)

Lewis argues that there is reality which can be described–the reality of the fact, the event, the moment in history. But there is another kind of reality, too: a completely "other" reality, rule, or law that tells people how they ought to behave.

In "The Poison of Subjectivism" Lewis takes up the relationship between God and this other kind of reality, Moral Law. According to Lewis, one's first inclination toward the relationship, to say that God is the author of Morality, is an insufficient response. The Moral Law consists of "fundamental imperatives" which are "absolute and categorical" (79). They deserve man's "absolute allegiance," as does God. This, however, raises a difficult dilemma: "Are these things right because God commands them or does God command them because they are right?" (79). If the former is true, then God could make whatever rules He wanted and, as such, He would be "emptied of meaning," possessing in His infinite Nature only one infinite quality: absolute power to do whatever He wanted. In this scenario "the commands of an omnipotent fiend would have the same claim on us

as those of the 'righteous Lord'" (79). If the latter is true, however, God becomes a cosmic cop who must execute a Moral Law which is separate from and comes before Him. That is also unacceptable.

Lewis's solution is the Trinity, an only slightly imaginable existence that transcends the idea of personhood understood by humanity. If the Personhood of God transcends human comprehension, then, perhaps

> the duality which seems to force itself upon us when we think, first, of our Father in Heaven, and, secondly, of the self-evident imperatives of the moral law, is not a mere error but a real (though inadequate and creaturely) perception of things that would necessarily be two in any mode of being which enters our experience, but which are not so divided in the absolute being of the superpersonal God. When we attempt to think of a person and a law, we are compelled to think of this person either as obeying the law or as making it. And when we think of Him as making it we are compelled to think of Him either as making it in conformity to some yet more ultimate pattern of goodness (in which case that pattern, not He, would be supreme) or else as making it arbitrarily by a *sic volo, sic jubeo* (in which case He would neither be good nor wise). But it is probably just here that our categories betray us. (80)

Lewis concludes that one's best response is two negations: "that God neither *obeys* nor *creates* the moral law." Thus, "the good is uncreated" (80). It is clear, then, that "God is not merely good, but goodness; goodness is not merely divine, but God" (80). One

concludes, then, that in the Nature of God is a single and absolute reality which in our fallen world is perceived as separate realities: that reality which describes (here is what 'is') and that reality which prescribes (here is what 'ought' to be).

Throughout his works, Lewis recognizes a hierarchy of Being based in Moral goodness. The greater the good in a thing the more real it is. Conversely, "evil is not a real *thing* at all, like God. It is simply good *spoiled*. That is why I say there can be good without evil, but no evil without good. [ . . . ] Evil is a parasite. It is there only because good is there for it to spoil and confuse" (*Letters to Greeves* 12 September 1933, 465). Lewis envisions a vast chain of being or "ontological continuity" from the Absolute Goodness that is God down to the absolute worst reprobate or devil (*Letters to Malcolm* 69). At the lowest end of this hierarchy of Moral Being is hell. In *The Problem of Pain* Lewis argues that hell is "the outer rim where being fades away into nonentity" (127). In *The Great Divorce*, the Lewis-narrator is taught that hell is smaller than one pebble on earth and smaller than one atom of heaven (122). Honda best summarizes Lewis's concept of Moral hierarchy:

> When we contrast heaven and hell presented in *The Great Divorce*, what impresses us most is the solid reality of heaven and the unsubstantial shadowy unreality of hell. "Heaven is reality itself" (69), says Macdonald to Lewis, the narrator. It is a traditional Judeo-Christian idea that existence is good and that Supreme Good, i.e. God whose name is "I Am," has the utmost Existence, or Reality. (100)

One cannot discuss levels of reality in Lewis's writings without touching on a

critical controversy. Many critics label Lewis's hierarchical view of reality as Platonic. Others deny the association. Previous passages in this section offer glimpses of a potential Platonic bent in Lewis's thinking. Recall how the characters in *Divorce* are ghostly apparitions in the density of heaven and that hell has no more being than a pebble even on earth. Recall also the "ontological continuity" that exists between God at the heights of being and the lowliest sinner (*Malcolm* 69). In the exploration of Moral Being and levels of reality, a hierarchy based on good and evil was clearly revealed. The idea of Platonic hierarchy, however, is not quite the same thing.

Plato believed that material reality was less real than the reality of pure ideas and unchanging forms (Sammons 43). If one wants to know truth, one must aspire to that higher realm. But in a letter to Arthur Greeves, Lewis notes that the Christian story is the "true myth" by which God reveals Himself to us: "The 'doctrines' we get *out of* the true myth are of course *less* true: they are translations into our *concepts* and *ideas* of that wh. God has already expressed in a language more adequate, namely the actual incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection" (*Letters to Greeves* 18 October 1931, 428). In other words, the reality of Jesus in the material world is more true than any truth statements made about Him. Here Lewis seems to completely invert the Platonic model in relation to the coming of God to the material world. The mutable form of Christ on earth was more real than that world of immutable forms, more true than the pure ideas. When God becomes man, He does not cease to be God. If God is the most real 'thing' there is, He is still so when He takes on a physical body. Perhaps Lewis is redefining Plato here, or perhaps he is reading Plato as he was meant to be read, or, again, perhaps Lewis is revealing the

fulfillment (in Christ) of what Plato only hinted at.

In another letter to Greeves, Lewis writes:

> I agree that we don't know what a spiritual body is. But I don't like *contrasting* it with (your words) 'an actual, physical body'. This suggests that the spiritual body wd. be the opposite of 'actual'–i. e. some kind of vision or imagination. [ . . . ] I suspect the distinction is the other way round–that it is something compared with which our present bodies are half real and phantasmal. (19 August 1947, 510-11)

Here one sees the typically Platonic. The present human is a shadow of the true form that awaits. But here also is Lewis's idea that is suggested by the physical hardness of heaven in *Divorce* and the description of God as the most concrete reality in *Miracles*. Lewis associates higher reality with a more concrete materiality, something the reader does not normally do with Plato.

This association, however, explains the puzzling description in "Myth Became Fact" of Myth as the "father of innumerable truths on the abstract level [ . . . ] the mountain whence all the different streams arise which become truths down here in the valley of separation, *in hac valle abstractionis*" (66). The 'valley of separation' here is the valley of abstraction–truth is separated from concrete myth when it comes down to the human world; here it can only be perceived as abstraction. Lewis associates myth with heaven in this essay. And so when he says myth is not abstract like truth nor bound to the particular like experience, he is arguing a heaven of Platonic forms. Here below one can receive them only as shadows (or ideas) of the concrete forms that exist above. This

brings new understanding to Lewis's vision of heaven in *The Great Divorce*, especially in the conversation between one heavenly person and his old friend the intellectual apostate. The ghostly man argues that to find the answers to all questions would be stifling and lead to stagnation. His concrete counterpart counters: "You think that, because hitherto you have experienced truth only with the abstract intellect. I will bring you where you can taste it like honey and be embraced by it as by a bridegroom" (43). On earth, the truth is abstract statements one makes about reality. In heaven, truth is concretely real.

Two conceptions of the Platonic view of being have been heretofore described. Sammons contrasts Lewis's Platonic expression with the first view described (the one that associates spirit with the abstract and immaterial):

> Plato believed that [ . . . ] the physical world is only the realm of appearances, rather than solid reality–illusory, transitory. In this way, it is a shadow or copy of the "real world." But Lewis places his Platonic reality not in a far removed, abstract heaven, but rather at the very heart, the center of all that exists. [ . . . ] Furthermore, Lewis totally reverses the shadowy Platonic conception of heaven. We often tend to associate God and Heaven with the "sky" and the "spiritual," forgetting that our language is only symbolic and incapable of describing or understanding them. Consequently, says Lewis, God has become to many "like a gas diffused in space" or a "mist streaming upward"–vaporous, vague, indefinable, shadowy. We also have a "vague dream of Platonic paradises and gardens of the Hesperides" that represent the "heaven" we long for. (43)

Sammons at first distinguishes two forms of Platonism, but then she suggests with almost equal strength that Lewis's hierarchy of being is actually not the same as Plato's.

Duriez rejects a Platonic hierarchy completely, saying Lewis "didn't conceive of the natural and spiritual or think of the mind and the body in a kind of Platonic hierarchy, where the natural and the bodily is [sic] less real than the spiritual and the mental" (*C. S. Lewis* 212).[6] Thomas Howard also doubts the Platonic: the reader associates the spiritual with "something attenuated, diffused, and even etiolated, as opposed to the 'real' solidity and concreteness that characterizes our own planet–it is quite the other way around for Lewis" ("Perelandra" 316). Michael H. Macdonald, referring to *Mere Christianity*, contradicts these other critics: "Both Plato and Lewis objected to the view that matter is most real. They defended the alternative view that ultimate reality is more like mind or spirit than matter" ("Plato" 324). This comment, however, is an over-simplification, because the passage in *Mere* (22) is intended to establish a basic dichotomy: whatever is behind the universe is personal, not impersonal. In that sense, it *is* more like mind than matter. But, as seen before, Lewis goes on to argue that ultimate reality must be even more concrete than matter. What only the mind apprehends abstractly in this world, the whole person experiences concretely in the next. Nor is spirit abstract; rather it has the concrete qualities of the real that on earth one associates with matter. At the same time, Lewis calls our earth the "Shadowlands" (*Last Battle* 228). Marvin D. Hinten and Bruce L. Edwards credit Plato for Lewis's vision of heaven in both *The Great Divorce* and *The Last Battle*. They argue that, for both Plato and Lewis, "heavenly forms are more substantial" ("Shadowlands" 375).

The complex relationships among mind, matter, spirit, abstraction, heaven and the concrete return the reader to "Myth Became Fact." There one is given the image of a heavenly mountain, the world of myth, which is both universal and concrete. Born from this world of myth are streams that flow like rivers, losing their concretion, their solidity, and entering the mind here in the 'valley of separation' (of abstraction) as abstractions, truths. This world of abstraction, however, is also the world of materiality, where experience is concrete but bound to the particular. And, most paradoxically, this world of the material is only shadows, suggests Lewis. This mingling in Lewis of the meaning of concrete and abstract helps illuminate his definition of allegory which, in turn, helps the reader make more sense of his Platonism.

In *The Allegory of Love*, Lewis writes, "It is of the very nature of thought and language to represent what is immaterial in picturable terms. What is good or happy has always been high like the heavens and bright like the sun" (44). In the next paragraph Lewis says that this "fundamental equivalence between the immaterial and the material may be used by the mind in two ways . . . ." In the first way, one uses images to express thoughts and feelings. Thus, if one is torn between anger and gentleness, he might explain his "state of mind by inventing a person called *Ira* with a torch and letting her contend with another invented person called *Patientia*" (45). To do this is to make allegory. But there is another way to use the relationship between the material and the immaterial:

> If our passions, being immaterial, can be copied by material inventions, then it is possible that our material world in its turn is the copy of an

> invisible world. As the god Amor and his figurative garden are to the actual passions of men, so perhaps we ourselves and our 'real' world are to something else. The attempt to read that something else through its sensible imitations, to see the archetype in the copy, is what I mean by symbolism or sacramentalism. (45)

Immediately important in this passage is the way in which Lewis deals with the material versus the immaterial. His is no simple Platonism in which abstract truths are more real than concrete reality. Lewis's vision is much more complex. In *Allegory*, there are invisible ideas, which people describe in images; these images mimic a more concrete visible reality, which may itself be only an imitation of a higher *invisible* reality! This passage is similar to Lewis's own description of the medieval cosmos in which he denies the modern misconception that medieval man believed he was the important center of the universe. Though the medieval model placed the earth at the center of the physical universe, "the intelligible universe reverses it all; there the Earth is the rim, the outside edge where being fades away on the border of nonentity" (*The Discarded Image* 116).

To understand more completely Lewis's Platonism one must examine *The Last Battle*, where the reader is presented with multiple realities described in Lewis's most overtly Platonic writing. The heroes enter a new Narnia which turns out to be "More like the real thing" (210). One learns that the old Narnia, the only one ever known in the books, "was not the real Narnia. That had a beginning and an end. It was only a shadow or a copy of the real Narnia which has always been here and always will be here: just as our own world, England and all, is only a shadow or copy of something in Aslan's real

world" (211-12). Digory says it is as different as a real thing is from a shadow or as waking is from a dream. Then he makes the important statement: "It's all in Plato, all in Plato. . ." (212). At this point the narrator takes over:

> It is as hard to explain how this sunlit land was different from the old Narnia, as it would be to tell you how the fruits of that country taste. Perhaps you will get some idea of it, if you think like this. You may have been in a room in which there was a window that looked out on a lovely bay of the sea or a green valley that wound away among mountains. And in the wall of that room opposite to the window there may have been a looking-glass. And as you turned away from the window you suddenly caught sight of that sea or that valley, all over again, in the looking-glass. And the sea in the mirror, or the valley in the mirror, were in one sense just the same as the real ones: yet at the same time they were somehow different–deeper, more wonderful, more like places in a story: in a story you have never heard but very much want to know. The difference between the old Narnia and the new Narnia was like that. The new one was a deeper country: every rock and flower and blade of grass looked as if it meant more. I can't describe it any better than that: if you ever get there you will know what I mean. (212-13)

The most significant part of the passage above is the line, "as if it meant more." The significance of the new Narnia is not its physical size but the largeness of its being. And as being increases, so does meaning. This passage is a key to solving the riddle of the

triple enigma and to understanding the distinctiveness of Lewis's epistemology. The unicorn summarizes the impression everyone is experiencing: "I have come home at last! This is my real country!" (213). Lewis's vision to this point in *Battle* is clearly Platonic, similar to that which he shows us in *Divorce*. But, par for Lewis, the vision becomes more complex.

When they reach the golden gates of the garden at the center of the new Narnia, the heroes enter in only to find that "the place was far larger than it had seemed from the outside" (222). As they journey on they discover that the garden really is "bigger inside than it was outside" (224). Notes Mr. Tumnus, "The further up and further in you go, the bigger everything gets. The inside is larger than the outside." The paradoxical reversal of reality that Lewis describes in *The Discarded Image*, that the Earth was perceived as at the center of the physical universe and on the outer edge of being, is mirrored in this image. Lucy looks at the garden in the new Narnia and realizes it is not a garden but a whole world, one she immediately recognizes: "'I see,'" she said. "'This is still Narnia, and more real and more beautiful than the Narnia down below, just as *it* was more real and more beautiful than the Narnia outside the stable door! I see . . . world within world, Narnia within Narnia . . .'" (*Last Battle* 224-25). Lewis's hierarchy now expands, going beyond the image of vertical levels. Here the higher beings/realities are not above as much as they are within the lower, yet not within for they are larger.

Finally comes another complex image, multiple realities on a plane that is both hierarchical and interior. There is a great "chain of mountains which ringed round the whole world" (225). Aslan's country is there. And out from "the great mountains of

Aslan" jut spurs of lesser mountains–these are the "*real* countries," the most real Narnia and the real England which join together as the heroes journey further up and further in (226). Numerous real worlds must jut out from these mountains, and from them the numerous shadow worlds. Here there is both hierarchy and interiority. The journey to heaven is both upward and inward. If Lewis does move beyond Plato here, it is, nevertheless, with the recognition of Platonic conception over all. This is seen at the end of *The Last Battle* when Aslan refers to their old worlds as "Shadowlands" (228).

Lewis's conception of multiple realities is complex. Before leaving it, one more issue must be considered: how multiple realities create epistemological difficulties. That a relationship exists between knowing and levels of reality is evident in *Pain* when Lewis discusses the *a priori* nature of the moral law. We cannot become aware of this moral law through logical "inference from the facts of experience; if we did not bring it to our experience we could not find it there. It is either inexplicable illusion, or else revelation" (22). Lewis thought it to be revelation. His point is that some knowledge, like the knowledge of the good, can only be known through revelation. Thus some knowledge depends on a higher level of reality. Without it, we make all kinds of mistakes in our thinking.

The last sub-section, however, made it clear that Lewis believed knowing reality was possible. In "On Stories," he describes how the imagination can grasp higher realities that reason cannot. As examples, he points to *Oedipus*, *The Man Who Would Be King*, and *The Hobbit*, stories of fulfilled prophecy that fill the reader with a feeling of awe because they

> set before our imagination something that has always baffled the intellect: we have *seen* how destiny and free will can be combined, even how free will is the *modus operandi* of destiny. The story does what no theorem can quite do. It may not be 'like real life' in the superficial sense: but it sets before us an image of what reality may well be like at some more central region. (15)

The imagination is capable of doing, in part, what reason cannot: enabling the knower to apprehend some "more central region." Notice, also, the similarity between this image of levels of reality and Aslan's country in *The Last Battle* which is at the center of multiple levels of reality.

Lewis makes a similar claim for imagination and knowing levels in *Miracles*:

> Grammatically the things we say of Him are "metaphorical": but in a deeper sense it is our physical and psychic energies that are mere "metaphors" of the real Life which is God. Divine Sonship is, so to speak, the solid of which biological sonship is merely a diagrammatic representation on the flat.
>
> [ . . . I]t is just the recognition of God's positive and concrete reality which the religious imagery preserves. [ . . . ] The ultimate spiritual reality is not vaguer, more inert, more transparent than the images, but more positive, more dynamic, more opaque. [ . . . ] Neither God nor even the gods are "shadowy" in traditional imagination: even the human dead, when glorified in Christ, cease to be "ghosts" and become "saints." [ . . . ]

> If we must have a mental picture to symbolise Spirit, we should represent it as something *heavier* than matter. (122-23)

That one can know of higher levels of reality may be limited but it is not impossible, and through the imagination one can come closer to it. This passage is also important as the propositional explication of those images seen so far of a heaven more concrete than our material reality. Lewis's Platonic paradox of concrete spirit is more thoroughly discussed here than in any of the previous passages. But additionally revealed is the role of the imagination in knowing, a relationship seldom associated with Plato, the lover of reason and hater of poets.

## IV. Transposition

Recall the last sentence of the above quote from *Miracles*: "If we must have a mental picture to symbolise Spirit, we should represent it as something *heavier* than matter" (123). Within the context of its passage, the statement is clear. But taken by itself, its tone suggests that one should shy away from mental or imaginative pictures of Spirit. Are our images of heaven false? Are the symbols, the metaphors we use to describe higher levels of reality misleading to the point that they hinder rather than aid understanding? The response Lewis makes in his theory of transposition is, in part, to suggest that the symbolic may be more real, that is, more literal than we think.

Lewis suggests this idea when he refers in "The Weight of Glory" to nature as a "first sketch" (17). "Nature is only the image, the symbol" of a greater glory to which human kind is called (17). Ultimately, people "are summoned to pass in through Nature, beyond her, into that splendour which she fitfully reflects" (17). The idea of reflection is

key. Throughout his writing Lewis finds reality in metaphor, moments of the literal in figural fragments. A favorite example is in regard to marriage and sexuality: "The Christian idea of marriage is based on Christ's words that a man and wife are to be regarded as a single organism–for that is what the words 'one flesh' would be in modern English. And the Christians believe that when He said this He was not expressing a sentiment but stating a fact" (*Mere Christianity* 88). In *Miracles*, sexuality is related specifically to the concept of transposition: "Even our sexuality should be regarded as the transposition into a minor key of that creative joy which in Him is unceasing and irresistable" (121).

Another favorite association for Lewis is between transposition and the Incarnation. He takes this up in *Miracles* as well. As was noted earlier in *Miracles*, the first significant miracle, according to Lewis, is man himself. How is it possible that spirit indwells a physical body? This indwelling is almost as miraculous as the Incarnation, where the "Divine Spirit dwelled within the created and human spirit of Jesus" (147), and it is significant transpositionally, that is, as a sign "that our own composite existence is not the sheer anomaly it might seem to be, but a faint image of the Divine Incarnation itself–the same theme in a very minor key." Lewis sees in the comparison a grand scheme or unifying principle wherein God descends into human spirit, human spirit into nature, thoughts into senses and emotions, adult minds into sympathy with children, people into sympathy with animals; and, if this is so,

> then everything hangs together and the total reality, both Natural and Supernatural, in which we are living is more multifariously and subtly

> harmonious than we had expected. We catch sight of a new key principle–the power of the Higher, just in so far as it is truly Higher, to come down, the power of the greater to include the less. (147)

This descending occurs in the Incarnation, but the pattern is not one of singular direction. God descends in order to reascend: "He goes down to come up again and bring the whole ruined world up with Him" (148). And this pattern in the action of Divine Nature is visible in all of nature herself: in the reproduction of plant life from a seed, in the birth of animals from the hidden interior of the womb. Lewis calls this pattern of Descent and Re-ascent "the very formula of reality" (166), from the heights of living being to the depths of death itself. The "very pattern of reality" is in Christ who truly lives and so can truly die (172): "Because the higher can descend into the lower He who from all eternity has been incessantly plunging Himself in the blessed death of self-surrender to the Father can also most fully descend into the horrible and (for us) involuntary death of the body" (172).

From the transpositional view of reality one can glean an interconnectedness which has to this point only been glimpsed at in this exploration. One can also see the truth in Duriez's claim that matter is significant along with spirit (*C. S. Lewis* 212). If, however, Duriez believes that transposition means an absence of hierarchy, one cannot agree. The pattern of descent and re-ascent works only in a vertical relationship. Because God is above, He is able to descend to us who are below. However, the purpose of descent is to take up the lower into the higher, and in this sense only is Duriez right. Humanity is raised up as He is made low. Does this mean that hierarchy exists now

because of the fall, but will later disappear? No. Lewis suggests that Christ's humbling Himself before the Father and subsequent glorification by Him is an eternal circle, and this pattern is the model, ultimately, of all creation (Payne 49).

Of course, Lewis's magnum opus on transposition is his sermon of that title. He begins with a problem: how can one know whether the instances of speaking in tongues or *glossolalia* that have been exhibited throughout the centuries in church history are legitimate spiritual miracles or simple human hysteria? ("Transposition" 54-55). From here Lewis raises the larger problem behind the specific instance. All that people do that has traditionally been associated with the supernatural seems, from the skeptic's point of view, to have natural roots. He cites as example the great religious mystics whose language of experiencing the Divine is the same we use in describing erotic experiences (56). All that we label supernatural in our experiences can be explained by natural means.

To answer the skeptic, Lewis asks if there is any example in nature of a higher thing reaching down to a lower. If such an example can be found, insights may arise as to the way supernature operates (57). He suggests looking at the experience of aesthetic rapture (his Joy) and notes that the emotional response is frequently accompanied by a physical response, as if the emotional intensity spills over into the body. Then he notices that the physical response to extreme delight is not too far different from the same physical response people experience in anguish. We may weep at both; we may feel a knot in the stomach with both. Yet the emotions themselves are opposites. That the emotional life is richer, more varied than the life of the sensations is proven in that the

body's responses to various experiences are fewer than human emotional responses. The body must use the same physical responses for a larger variety of emotional responses. This indicates the higher coming down into the lower, the example that Lewis is looking for (59). The poorer can never have one-to-one correspondence with the richer.

Lewis's second observation is that the word "symbolism" is not always a sufficient label for the relationship between the higher medium and its transposition into the lower:

> It covers some cases perfectly, but not others. Thus the relation between speech and writing is one of symbolism. The written characters exist solely for the eye, the spoken words solely for the ear. There is complete discontinuity between them. They are not like one another, nor does the one cause the other to be. The one is simply a *sign* of the other and signifies it by a convention. But a picture is not related to the visible world in just that way. Pictures are part of the visible world themselves and represent it only by being part of it. Their visibility has the same source. The suns and lamps in pictures seem to shine only because real suns or lamps shine on them; that is, they seem to shine a great deal because they really shine a little in reflecting their archetypes. The sunlight in a picture is therefore not related to real sunlight simply as written words are to spoken. It is a sign, but also something more than a sign, and only a sign because it is also more than a sign, because in it the thing signified is really in a certain mode present. If I had to name the

> relation I should call it not symbolical but sacramental. But in the case we started from–that of emotion and sensation–we are even further beyond mere symbolism. For there, as we have seen, the very same sensation does not merely accompany, nor merely signify, diverse and opposite emotions, but becomes part of them. The emotion descends bodily, as it were, into the sensation and digests, transforms, transubstantiates it, so that the same thrill along the nerves *is* delight or *is* agony. (62-63)

Lewis's point: some instances of symbolism are purely representational. Others are transpositional or sacramental: the thing being symbolized is actually present in the symbol itself.

"Transposition" continues with a summary of the concept: "Transposition occurs wherever the higher reproduces itself in the lower" (63). Lewis offers yet another example in the relationship between mind and brain. Seen from below, the brain is all there is and thought is simply the movement of atoms. But that movement corresponds to numerous, varied activities of mind, fitting the model of transposition.

Lewis next returns to the problem of spirit and nature (64). Remember from his introduction that what may be an event engendered by spirit nevertheless appears to be only a natural phenomenon. His response now is that, in transposition, this is the way it should look. Materialists will only see religious hysteria in *glossolalia* because they are looking from the bottom up and because, in transposition, the higher is taking up the lower into itself, not acting in contradiction to it. Spiritual presence can never be discerned in any way but spiritually (65).

In his conclusion Lewis adds four additional points. First, his theory of transposition is not to be confused with the theory of "Developmentalism," which reverses the process. Millions of years of eating did not precede the Christian sacrament (70). Second, transposition helps explain the Incarnation. One of the creeds says that the Incarnation was accomplished "not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of the Manhood into God" (71). Third, when looking from below, the materialist will have all of the facts but none of the meaning. One will never see that there is something higher by focusing only on the lower (71). Finally, Lewis believes that what people experience in physical reality may be a real analogy of the spiritual; it may be symbolic or sacramental in the sense discussed earlier–*symbolizing* spiritual reality and, somehow, simultaneously *being* that reality.

V. Sacrament and the Problem of Knowing

Much of what sacramentalism is about was discussed in the last sub-section. Transposition and Sacrament are closely related. That Lewis viewed reality sacramentally is significant not only for defining reality but also because it sheds light on Lewis's epistemology.

Part of the reader's interest in Lewis's sacramentalism should be the fact that it represents a near opposite extreme to the idealism Lewis once held. This was shown to be apparent in some of his early letters to Arthur Greeves: Lewis once believed that "Matter=Nature=Satan. And on the other side Beauty, the only spiritual & not-natural thing that I have yet found" (*Letters to Greeves* 23 May 1918, 214). This younger, idealist Lewis stands in marked contrast to the Christian convert who "not only believes

in the world of objective Reality but also loves it, yearns for it, and thinks that human beings can actually attain that Reality in heaven as Real men or women, becoming a part of the Reality. This attainment of Reality is always his first concern" (Honda xiv). Lewis's philosophical war with the flesh was not a part of his Christian way of thinking. So "where other systems expose our total nature to death (as in Buddhist renunciation) Christianity demands only that we set right a *misdirection* of our nature, and has no quarrel, like Plato, with the body as such, nor with the physical elements in our make-up" (*The Problem of Pain* 104). An earlier section asked whether Plato really elevated mind and abstraction above body and form. Here one sees that Lewis thought Plato did so. Does this passage mean the critics who call Lewis a Platonist are wrong? Not necessarily, for the argument put forth for a modified Platonism is still valid. Clearly, Lewis believed in a hierarchy of being, and yet his hierarchy is more complex, involving transpositional comminglings, the commingling of the abstract and the concrete at all levels, and a sacramental respect for the lower (the earthly) level of the hierarchy. Not very Platonic, perhaps, but one can hardly read Digory saying, 'It's all in Plato, all in Plato,' and then claim that there is no Platonic theory in Lewis's thinking.

Nevertheless, Lewis found value in the physical body and thought Plato did not, as a letter to Dom Bede Griffiths indicates: "But I fear Plato thought the concrete flesh and grass bad, and have no doubt he was wrong" (*Letters* 17 January 1940, 335). In *Letters to Malcolm*, Lewis values the physical body as unique among God's sentient creatures, saying that

> but for our body one whole realm of God's glory–all that we receive

> through the senses–would go unpraised. For the beasts can't appreciate it and the angels are, I suppose, pure intelligences. They *understand* colours and tastes better than our greatest scientists; but have they retinas or palates? I fancy the "beauties of nature" are a secret God has shared with us alone. That may be one of the reasons why we were made–and why the resurrection of the body is an important doctrine. (17-18)

Lewis valued the physical body and the whole of physical creation because he viewed reality sacramentally.

We have seen Lewis describe this sacramental view of reality in two passages. In *The Allegory of Love* he said that allegory is the act of using symbols to express our invisible concepts. Symbolism or sacramentalism, though, is the act of looking for a higher (archetypal), invisible "something" in our own visible world. In "Transposition" Lewis clearly indicates that earthly reality can not only symbolize heavenly reality but also *be* something of that reality (62-63). He calls this quality "sacramental" (63).

Michael Edwards lays out a system for understanding the sacramental relationship between the heavenly and the earthly in his article, "C. S. Lewis: Imagining Heaven." In order to imagine heaven, he argues, we must first attend "to everyday earth" (114). Lewis does not doubt the reality of earth nor does he grudgingly bear it while waiting for heaven. He loves the real as he both knows and will come to know it. His vision of heaven is "both other and the same" (115). Heaven is our world, but our world as "enhanced [ . . . ] changed, as the more-than-real, as the really real." At the same time, Edwards realizes that earth is not heaven. It provides "glimpses of heaven" (116). Thus

one faces the danger of loving the earth too much so as to hold on to it "and resist God's calling of us towards the better earth of heaven" (121). But one's response should not be to revile the earth. Lewis says this is a distinctive view in Christianity: "Isn't Xtianity [sic] separated from the other religions just by the fact that it does not allow one to exclude or reject matter?" (*Letters to Greeves* 5 February 1945, 504). Edwards concludes that sacramentalism requires a balanced perspective. Though there is a sameness between heaven and earth, there is also an otherness. Heaven is not just a "dazzlingly better" version of earth; imagining it is severely hindered, not just by our finiteness and fallenness, but also because of the promise that there will be new heavens and a new earth (Edwards 123).

As Edwards lays out a sacramental view of heaven and earth, so Payne synthesizes Lewis's sacramental view of God. Payne begins her second chapter with Lewis's claim in *Miracles* that God is the most concrete thing there is and the most basic fact. From there she argues that "[w]hile it is impossible that our anthropomorphic images of God can fully reflect His presence within, without, and all about us, our abstractions of Him can be even more harmfully misleading" (17). She defends this view by referring to *Letters to Malcolm*: "What soul ever perished for believing that God the Father really has a beard?" (*Malcolm* 22). Anthropomorphizing God is not an answer to knowing Him but worse is abstraction. Says Payne, "our fear of naive anthropomorphism should never drive us to a degree of theological abstraction that becomes a substitute for receiving experientially Reality Himself" (18).

Later, she outlines a clear sacramental approach to God:

> God is no more an abstraction to Lewis than He was to Moses. To both men He was ultimate reality and capable of manifesting Himself, even though in a "mediated" or "transposed" form. Moses learned that God's radiant substantiveness had to be mediated by a form which his mortal eyes could bear to look upon. Lewis also learned this lesson, and the history of JOY in his life weaves the incarnational pattern of God's revelations.
>
> This embodiment of spiritual reality in material form is the principle of the Incarnation; or in other words, it is the principle of sacramental truth whereby God's Real Presence is made manifest in and through the material world. The Incarnation was and is, of course, the most amazing and complete example of a mediated (i. e., a sacramental) reality. Since Christ ascended in the flesh, ultimate reality is known by man in union with Him through the Person of the Holy Spirit. (20)

For Payne the very life of a Christian is sacramental and supernatural. It is the coming of God, the Spirit, into us while we yet dwell in bodily form on earth. In that sacramental relationship we come to know God.

A sacramental view of reality is relevant to a study of the triple enigma because it is in the context of sacrament that the enigma passage occurs. *Perelandra* can be viewed as an enactment of the enigma passage. Chapter three of this study will show how the Un-man first tempts the Queen through reason (the truth element of the enigma). Then chapter four will reveal how the Un-man tempts the Queen in her imagination (the myth

element). The remainder of this chapter briefly examines how Ransom comes to the realization that the battle against the Un-man must be carried into physical confrontation (fact). The theme is a repeated one:

> In *Perelandra*, when the protagonist Ransom begins to lose the debate with the Un-man; in *The Silver Chair*, when the Witch's word-enchantment has nearly brought success; when all the Voluble Selves of *The Great Divorce* are about to rhetorize their way back to hell–in each of these cases, Lewis abandons argument for action, remonstration for demonstration. (Como xxviii)

As the war of wit with the Un-man proceeds, Ransom realizes that he cannot compete against a creature who needs no sleep and who has lies and half-truths as part of his arsenal. Ransom knows that, if the temptation is allowed to continue, the Queen will eventually succumb.

Twice the thought comes to Ransom that "this can't go on" (127, 134). After occuring a third time (140), Ransom finally realizes that the thought is not his own but is a command of God. He wonders what he can do and rationalizes that God will take care of things and that he (Ransom) was probably sent there to merely observe the triumph over evil which he would return to Earth to report. He concludes, "It was in God's hands. One must be content to leave it there. One must have Faith. [ . . . ] It snapped like a violin string" (141). Ransom realizes that he is there to be the hands of God, that he has been self-deceiving. When he finally sees the truth, his real purpose on Perelandra, he is revulsed:

It stood to reason that a struggle with the Devil meant a *spiritual* struggle . . . the notion of a physical combat was only fit for a savage. If only it *were* as simple as that [ . . . ] The habit of imaginative honesty was too deeply engrained in Ransom to let him toy for more than a second with the pretense that he feared bodily strife with the Un-man less than he feared anything else. Vivid pictures crowded upon him . . . the deadly cold of those hands [ . . . ] the long metallic nails . . . ripping off narrow strips of flesh, pulling out tendons. One would die slowly. [ . . . ]

It was fortunate that something so horrible should be so obviously out of the question. Almost, but not quite, Ransom decreed that whatever the Silence and the Darkness seemed to be saying about this, no such crude, materialistic struggle could possibly be what Maleldil really intended. Any suggestion to the contrary must be only his own morbid fancy. It would degrade the spiritual warfare to the condition of mere mythology. But here he got another check. Long since on Mars, and more strongly since he came to Perelandra, Ransom had been perceiving that the triple distinction of truth from myth and of both from fact was purely terrestrial–was part and parcel of that unhappy division between soul and body which resulted from the Fall. Even on earth the sacraments existed as a permanent reminder that the division was neither wholesome nor final. The Incarnation had been the beginning of its disappearance. In Perelandra it would have no meaning at all. Whatever happened here

> would be of such a nature that earth-men would call it mythological. All this he had thought before. Now he knew it. The Presence in the darkness, never before so formidable, was putting these truths into his hands, like terrible jewels. (143-44)

Having believed all his life in the spiritual significance of the Incarnation, he is now awakened to its physical or sacramental significance where, on a perfect planet, all those who stand for Maleldil are types of the Incarnation. Ransom learns to reimagine his faith, his place; it comes to him in an overwhelming final revelation: "It is not for nothing that you are named Ransom" (147). He realizes that he is there to be the hands of the great Divine Ransom. Thus realizing, he obeys and confronts the *Un-man* in single combat. "Fact" in the triple enigma clearly indicates an epistemological connection between knowing and doing. Ransom comes to understand that, for truth to win out over the lies of the Un-man, it must be acted out and physically defended. The idea echoes St. John's first epistle: "the one who does not love does not know God . . ." (I John 4.8). In other words, knowing reality requires right action in/toward reality.

As stated above, a sacramental view of reality bears relevance to epistemological explorations in Lewis. Payne introduces an epistemological problem: "One should point out that for Lewis the sharp division of nature from super-nature, of matter from created spirit, may be an accident of our limited point of view" (46). Recall from chapter one the context in which the "Myth Became Fact" essay was written. Lewis raises the epistemological problem of thinking versus experiencing: we can think about a thing, but in doing so we reduce it to an abstraction. We can experience a thing, but then we have

no analytical understanding of it. We cannot do both at the same time: "You cannot *study* Pleasure in the moment of the nuptial embrace, nor repentance while repenting, nor analyse the nature of humour while roaring with laughter. But when else can you really know these things?" ("Myth Became Fact" 65-66). Lewis says, "Human intellect is incurably abstract" (65). Between the abstract and the concrete lies the problem. But therein also lies a false solution.

Discussing Platonism earlier, we saw that Macdonald said Lewis and Plato believed "ultimate reality is more like mind or spirit than matter" ("Plato" 324). The significant mistake as regards Lewis's epistemology is in associating mind with spirit. If one applies Macdonald's comment to "Myth Became Fact" the following dichotomy results:

| | |
|---|---|
| Ultimate Reality = Mind/Spirit | Derivative Reality = Matter/Earth |
| \| | \| |
| Thought = Abstraction | Experience = Concreteness or Materiality |

The mistake is in associating spirit with abstraction. It leads to a natural versus supernatural dichotomy that is, as quoted from Payne, "an accident of our limited point of view" (46). To divide nature and supernature by the terms concrete (for nature) and abstract (for supernature) is the mistake that must be avoided for accurate understanding of Lewis's conception of reality. Part of the problem, however, is that the difficult blending of idea with image coupled with the piling on of multiple metaphors in the "Myth Became Fact" essay lends to Macdonald's misreading.

The critical paragraphs in "Myth Became Fact" are on its last two pages (66-67).

One of the metaphors struggled with earlier was that in which "myth is the isthmus which connects the peninsular world of thought with the vast continent we really belong to. It is not like truth, abstract; nor is it, like direct experience, bound to the particular" (66). In this image it is easy to read myth as a conduit between physical reality and the world of thought. But this is not the correct reading. By beginning with a dichotomy between the concrete world and the world of abstraction, Lewis creates a paradigm into which a reader might falsely impose the dichotomy of spirit/abstraction versus body/reality. Instances have been shown where Lewis has had to constantly correct people's thinking on the idea that spirit is ghostly, lacking in substance. This false thinking could easily be applied to Lewis's images in the present essay where those images emphasize how myth links truth to reality.

Another passage that lends itself to misreading is when Lewis says that with myth we are allowed to "taste" a "universal principle." But the "moment we *state* this principle, we are admittedly back in the world of abstraction. It is only while receiving the myth as a story that we experience the principle concretely" (66). Again myth looks like a conduit between abstract and concrete worlds. That, however, is not Lewis's intention.

The reality here is a complexity far greater than a simple spirit-is-abstraction equation allows. Myth is higher reality that gives birth to truth which only becomes abstract here in the physical world, the valley of separation or abstraction. At the same time, though, Lewis asserts that as "myth transcends thought, Incarnation transcends myth" (66). The concepts of transposition and sacrament explain this complex view of

reality. The levels of reality flow in and out of one another, just as the gods flow in and out of one another and people in *Till We Have Faces* (50).

What is clear throughout Lewis's writing, including "Myth Became Fact," is that the highest reality is the most concrete of all. This was proven from the Greeves letter of 19 August 1947 where Lewis writes that our present bodies are "half phantasmal" in comparison to the spiritual bodies to come (*Letters to Greeves* 510-11). The idea appears briefly in *Out of the Silent Planet* in the eldila who bathe in light and see physical creatures as ghostlike (94-95). It is the major controlling image of *Divorce*. And it was shown several times in *Mere Christianity* and, especially, in *Miracles*:

> If anything is to exist at all, then the Original Thing must be, not a principle nor a generality, much less an 'ideal' or a 'value,' but an utterly concrete fact.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> God is basic Fact or Actuality, the source of all other facthood. At all costs therefore He must not be thought of as a featureless generality. If He exists at all, He is the most concrete thing there is . . . (116, 121)

In *Miracles* Lewis contrasts the physical quality of both the Incarnation and the Resurrection with the contemporary conception of heaven as "a risen life which is purely 'spiritual' in the negative sense of that word: that is, we use the word 'spiritual' to mean not what it is but what it is not. We mean a life without space, without history, without environment, with no sensuous elements in it" (193). Lewis rejects this vision of heaven. All of these *Miracles* references speak specifically to the problem of equating spirit with

abstraction. This equation is, for Lewis, a complete reversal of the real.

Having said this, we cannot yet leave the "Myth Became Fact" essay nor the problem of knowing as it relates to reality. In the essay, Lewis raises the problem of concrete versus abstract knowing. Some of the critics suggest that this problem is caused by a more basic one. The separation of subject from object may be the root cause of the concrete/abstract dichotomy. Because we (the thinking subject) are constantly separated from the objects of life about which we want to know, we are never able simultaneously to both experience them and think about them. But in what way are we separated from the objects we want to know? Perhaps we are not, suggests Payne: "for Lewis the sharp division of nature from super-nature, of matter from created spirit, may be an accident of our limited point of view" (46). She goes on to say, "matter and spirit may be more akin than we know."

Honda associates this matter/spirit connection with the subject/object dichotomy:

> The actual Lewis believes in heaven as the world of objective Reality to which our present world is, as it were, only a world of subjectivity. In *Letters to Malcolm*, he imagines what it would possibly be like to see heaven:
>
> > It is like seeing nature itself rising from its grave. What was sown in momentariness is raised in still permanence. What was sown as a becoming, rises as being. Sown in subjectivity, it rises in objectivity. The transitory secret of two is now a chord in the ultimate music . . . .[T]he hills and valleys of Heaven will be to

> those you now experience not as a copy is to an original, nor as a substitute is to the genuine article, but as the flower to the root, or the diamond to the coal. (123) (Honda 101)

This passage comments directly on the issue at hand. If, in our current world, we live in a state where we, as subjects, are constantly separated from the objects we would know, and if this is indeed because we face (in our own fallenness and the fallenness of the world around us) a disconnection between matter and spirit, then the problem of thinking and experiencing, of abstract analysis and concrete awareness makes sense. We are unable to both experience and think about a thing (and therefore completely know it) because we are only able to connect to it as matter. Spirit, in this model of knowing, becomes the conduit (in this case the missing conduit) between subjective mind and external object. If humanity lived in a world like Lewis's conception of heaven, spirit would be more fully connecting all subjects to all objects so that to experience a thing in the body and to think about its significance would be a single, simultaneous activity.

This intimate connecting is what Lewis is referring to when he emphasizes *meaning* in his description of the heavenly new Narnia in *The Last Battle*: a glimpse of a land or seascape in a mirror which is the same as the real one but "deeper, more wonderful, more like places in a story. [ . . . ] The new one [Narnia] was a deeper country: every rock and flower and blade of grass looked as if it meant more" (213). In heaven, spirit connects the subjective to the objective, the mind to the experience and even the thing being experienced, so that to experience is to know–to taste and see–the meaning in an instant. To the dichotomies of the last sentence one might add that spirit connects the

abstract to the concrete, but it is better to say that, when one leaves the valley of abstraction for the mountain of myth, all abstraction and all separation utterly disappear as what become truths here in the valley are followed to their mythic sources on the mountaintop. Thus, there is no place along the stream where one may stop and say, "here is truth but there is myth." The separation no longer exists. Experiencing and thinking simply become knowing.

The discussion of Lewis's Platonism, and, especially, whether or not he was a Platonist, looked at definitions of Platonism which advanced that Plato believed in a perfect world of ideas or forms. One can here suggest that this world, to Lewis, may be one where idea and form come together, where the form of a thing is its idea. In his "Dialectic of Multiple Worlds," Michael Murrin describes *The Last Battle*'s heaven as a "geometry" (96), noting that "Plato ranks geometry higher than sensible perception because it never lies" (97). This passage hints at Lewis's conception of idea-as-form which is also found in Abbott's *Flatland* (a book to which Lewis refers, or from which he borrows, in several texts, most directly in "Bluspels and Flalansferes"). In the book, the higher dimensions of existence have literally higher dimensions of space. Above Lineland is Flatland, above which is Spaceland, above which, it is hypothesized, there is a four dimensional space where objects have more sides and lines than any below. This hypothesized world of four spatial dimensions is called "Thoughtland" (Abbott 73). In that place must dwell "Extra-Solids" and perhaps "Double Extra-Solids" (77). But it is a world of thought. Perhaps this is Lewis's vision when he says heaven is a place where subject and object come together: thought and form become one when subject

experiences object. Lewis would not say subject and object fuse completely in heaven so as to become indistinguishable. His concept of Trinity is the mirror of his concept of humanity in heaven–they are one and many (*Pain* 150). Instead, subject and object draw near, commingling but not consuming, so that the experiencing of the object is instantaneously correspondent with a knowledge of its meaning. The form is the idea; all ideas become objects capable of being experienced.

In chapter sixteen of *Miracles*, Lewis takes up the problem of fact and metaphor which has been touched upon throughout this fact/reality study. Lewis is discussing the nature of heaven, and specifically Christ's ascension, when he says that, in viewing the ascension, the disciples perceived Christ as both moving physically upward into the blue sky and ascending into the spiritual realm, the home of God (207). They did not distinguish between the physical and spiritual acts of ascent. To do so gives rise, Lewis argues, to a "literalism" which did not occur till the later Middle Ages and the seventeenth century. In fact, the man "who really believes that 'Heaven' is in the sky may well, in his heart, have a far truer and more spiritual conception of it than many a modern logician . . ." (207). The blending of the ideas of God, heaven, and the blue sky is not accidental at all. That we envision the sky as begetting and the earth as bearing is part and parcel with the imagination God gave us, with the foreknowledge God had of "what the sky would mean to us. And since nothing in His work is accidental, if He knew, He intended" (208). Perhaps such meanings are part of what the earth was created for: to see with the imagination the spiritual reality in the earthly image: "The ancients in letting the spiritual symbolism of the sky flow straight into their minds without stopping to discover

by analysis that it was a symbol, were not entirely mistaken" (208).

Lewis argues the importance of both intimacy between subject and object (where abstract theorizing doesn't take the knower away from the experiencing of meaning) and removing the divide between thinking and experiencing (abstract and concrete knowing). He goes on to say that he and his contemporaries have "fallen into an opposite difficulty" (*Miracles* 208). As example, again focusing on heaven, Lewis notes the jumble of competing images that make our vision of heaven:

> that it is, on the one hand, a life in Christ, a vision of God, a ceaseless adoration, and that it is, on the other hand, a bodily life. When we seem nearest to the vision of God in this life, the body seems almost an irrelevance. [ . . . ] But if that discrepancy were final then it would follow–which is absurd–that God was originally mistaken when He introduced our spirits into the Natural order at all. [ . . . ] The fact that the body, and locality and locomotion and time, now feel irrelevant to the highest reaches of the spiritual life is (like the fact that we can think of our bodies as "coarse") a *symptom*. Spirit and Nature have quarreled in us; that is our disease. Nothing we can yet do enables us to imagine its complete healing. Some glimpses and faint hints we have: in the Sacraments, in the use made of sensuous imagery by the great poets, in the best instances of sexual love, in our experiences of the earth's beauty. But the full healing is utterly beyond our present conceptions. Mystics have got as far in contemplation of God as the point at which the senses are

> banished: the further point, at which they will be put back again, has (to the best of my knowledge) been reached by no one. The destiny of redeemed man is not less but more unimaginable than mysticism would lead us to suppose–because it is full of semi-imaginables which we cannot at present admit without destroying its essential character. (209)

In ignoring all images of heaven, a person makes a greater mistake than those who confuse the images for the reality. For they, at least, do not mistakenly associate spirit with abstraction. Lewis's solution involves the marriage of Spirit and Nature, not their divorce. It is their separation that has led to 'the valley of separation,' of abstraction ("Myth Became Fact" 66). Their consummative marriage will lead to the place where subject and object commingle in spirit, and thinking and experiencing become the act of knowing.

Until then, the opposite is true. Abstraction wars against concrete experience and subject is increasingly separated from object:

> There is thus in the history of human thought, as elsewhere, a pattern of death and rebirth. The old, richly imaginative thought which still survives in Plato has to submit to the deathlike, but indispensable, process of logical analysis: nature and spirit, matter and mind, fact and myth, the literal and the metaphorical, have to be more and more sharply separated, till at last a purely mathematical universe and purely subjective mind confront one another across an unbridgeable chasm. But from this descent also, if thought itself is to survive, there must be re-ascent and the

> Christian conception provides for it. Those who attain the glorious resurrection will see the dry bones clothed again with flesh, the fact and the myth remarried, the literal and the metaphorical rushing together. (*Miracles* 211-12)

Herein is the conclusion to which this exploration will eventually come (only after first looking at truth and myth, and how reason and imagination relate to each); the answer to the problems of knowing raised by multiple realities which connect transpositionally, sacramentally, is to be found in embracing all levels of the real, especially the reality highest in ascent.

One sees in *Miracles* how the totality facilitates knowing:

> We are therefore compelled to believe that nearly all we are told about the New Creation is metaphorical. But not quite all. That is just where the story of the Resurrection suddenly jerks us back like a tether. The local appearances, the eating, the touching, the claim to be corporeal, must be either reality or sheer illusion. The New Nature is, in the most troublesome way, interlocked at some points with the Old. Because of its novelty, we have to think of it, for the most part, metaphorically: but because of the partial interlocking, some facts about it come through into our present experience in all their literal facthood–just as some facts about an organism are inorganic facts and some facts about a solid body are facts of linear geometry. (202)

Here is the geometry metaphor again. Its significance, the significance of the passage as a

whole, is that knowing occurs in the awareness of the otherness of multiple levels of reality and in the awareness of the sameness of these interpenetrating dimensions. But Lewis would add that above all the levels is the single fact of focus, that for which knowing has its purpose and which remains, in the end, above all knowing:

> To accept the idea of intermediate floors [levels of reality between highest heaven and our earth]–which the Christian story will, quite simply, force us to do if it is not a falsehood–does not of course involve losing our spiritual apprehension of the top floor of all. Most certainly, beyond all worlds, unconditioned and unimaginable, transcending discursive thought, there yawns for ever the ultimate Fact, the fountain of all other facthood, the burning and undimensioned depth of the Divine Life. (*Miracles* 204)

As we turn to consider Lewis's views of truth and then myth, we will find that much of the work has been done in this lengthy examination of fact and reality. After all, once one has figured out all of reality, the rest should come easy.

Notes

[1] Cf. *Miracles* 177 *n.* and *Surprised by Joy* 82.

[2] Cf. Lewis's comment a decade earlier (18 October 1931) in a letter to Arthur Greeves: "The pagan stories are God expressing Himself through the minds of poets, using such images as He found there, while Christianity is God expressing Himself through what we call 'real things'" (427).

[3] See Hooper Preface to *Spirits in Bondage* xxiv-xxv.

[4] Lewis's "broadcast talks" were originally delivered on the BBC. The first, "Right and Wrong: A Clue to the Meaning of the Universe," was delivered in 1941; the second, "What Christians Believe," in 1942. They were subsequently published in England as *Broadcast Talks* (1942), and in America as *The Case for Christianity* (1943). A third series of talks was published in 1943 as *Christian Behaviour: A Further Series of Broadcast Talks*. *Beyond Personality: The Christian Idea of God* (1944) is the third book, along with *The Case for Christianity* and *Christian Behaviour*, that Lewis later published as *Mere Christianity* (1952).

[5] Payne concurs: "Lewis points a scholarly, imaginative, and thoroughly devout finger at the Real, firmly believing that It *is*. Then, great logician that he his, he methodically un-masks all the precious idols that we have substituted for reality" (10).

6 Duriez denies a Lewisian hierarchy completely, and Michael Murrin concurs, saying that "Juxtaposition replaces the Platonic vertical ascent" (98).

## Chapter Three

## Truth

One would expect a study of "truth" to reveal a great deal about Lewis's epistemology. What is interesting, though, is that Lewis, the champion of Christian truth, had less to say about truth than either "myth" or "reality." Truth does not make the list of significant topics in several of the recent encyclopedic critical sources (Duriez *C. S. Lewis*, Hooper *C. S. Lewis*, even Martindale and Root *The Quotable Lewis*). Only Schultz and West and Goffar treat truth as a specific topic for commentary or study. This is probably because Lewis was more concerned with knowing reality than knowing *about* it. Still, truth is very significant to his thinking. A preliminary note is necessary: to discuss Lewis's conception of truth we must also delve into his view of "reason." Though chapter five is a more intensive study of "reason" and "imagination," the current chapter examines reason where its relationship to truth warrants doing so.

### I. Basic Definitions

"I am trying to find out truth" (*Mere Christianity* 13), says Lewis. In the great quest for truth, one concept, easily ignored because naturally assumed, must be remembered: truth is something for which humanity searches. It may not be readily available, easy to see. Truth must be found out, and finding it is absolutely critical, for truth has definite purpose. After hearing the wonders of Psyche's life with the god, Orual exclaims, "If this is all true, I've been wrong all my life. Everything has to be begun over again" (*Till We Have Faces* 115). What people we come to know or fail to find will affect the outcome of their lives. For this reason, elder demon Screwtape admonishes his

student Wormwood not to use argument to keep his patient "out of the Enemy's clutches" (*The Screwtape Letters* 7). Argument could awaken reason, reason could lead to truth, and truth could lead to God. Screwtape clearly delineates truth's original purpose in human living: in the past, thinking was connected with doing, and people "were prepared to alter their way of life as the result of a chain of reasoning" (7-8). Screwtape points out, however, that doing so is a difficult thing. Most people, instead, live with a set of contradictory truths about which they do not have to think too clearly so that they do not have to consider the consequences for their lives (8).

One great mistake in the search for truth must be done away with immediately. It is the mistake of saying that the journey is more important than the goal, that searching for truth matters more than finding it. So says the intellectual ghost in *Divorce*: "to travel hopefully is better than to arrive" (43). But his glorified counterpart replies, "If that were true, and known to be true, how could anyone travel hopefully? There would be nothing to hope for." The heavenly being is very clear: "Thirst was made for water; inquiry for truth" (44). The search may be important, but a person searches in order to find.

The Greek word for truth, *alethia*, with which Lewis would have been familiar in his reading of the classics and the New Testament, is etymologically rooted in the idea of uncovering. This root meaning provides an apt metaphor for Lewis's own approach to truth. Truth is to be searched for like a hidden treasure through a particular process of uncovering, but what is to be uncovered is not so much truth as it is our own eyes: "The process of living seems to consist in coming to realize truths so ancient and simple that, if stated, they sound like barren platitudes. They cannot sound otherwise to those who have

not had the relevant experience: that is why there is no real teaching of such truths possible and every generation starts from scratch . . ." (*Letters* 8 May 1939, 321). Truth is difficult to find. Our own perceptions and lack of experience cloud our ability to see it. Furthermore, over against truth stands its opposite, falsehood. Lewis writes to Dom Bede Griffiths, "Your Hindus certainly sound delightful. But what do they *deny*? That's always been my trouble with Indians–to find any proposition they wd pronounce false. But truth must surely involve exclusions" (*Letters* 8 February 1956, 453). Here is an example of Lewis's belief in the objectivity of truth. The reason Lewis sees truth as objective is because reality exists objectively (see chapter two). One of Lewis's complaints about several theological works of his day is that they discuss certain positions in terms of how they compare to contemporary thought or whether or not they are useful, but they "never squarely ask what grounds we have for supposing them to be true accounts of any objective reality" (*Letters to Malcolm* 104). For Lewis, truth statements can only be truth statements if they correspond to an objective external reality. Michael Macdonald claims that "Lewis accepted a definition of truth that consists in a correspondence between the mind and reality. There are no degrees of truth. Either a statement is true or not" ("Aristotle" 86).

Lewis's own definition of truth was recorded in the minutes of the Oxford Socratic Club: truth is "an external correspondence of statement and reality" (qtd. in Hooper "Oxford's Bonny Fighter" 153). This is his basic (though not complete) definition of truth. A poignant example of this definition occurs in *Out of the Silent Planet* when Ransom is telling his *hrossan* friends that he does not come from their land.

They quickly ask what earth (*handra*) he comes from, to which he responds he came out of the sky. Ransom, having given a "childish version of the truth in order to adapt it to the supposed ignorance of his audience," is annoyed when the *hrossa* try to explain to him that "he could not live in the sky because there was no air in it: he might have come through the sky but he must have come from a *handra*" (67).

Reality is what *is*. Truth is a statement one makes about reality that corresponds to it. This relationship was clarified near the beginning of chapter two in two foundational passages: "truth is always *about* something, but reality is that *about which* truth is" ("Myth Became Fact" 66), and "Events in general are not 'about' anything and cannot be true or false. (To say 'these events, or facts are false' means of course that someone's account of them is false.)" (*Miracles* 27). Lewis says that the "universe doesn't claim to be *true*: it's just *there*" ("Bulverism" 277). Truth claims are made by people, but verification is made by matching the statements to reality. Truth statements about fact are not, however, limited to description. Value statements can also be made about objects in reality. Recall from chapter two that Lewis refuted the notion of Gaius and Titius that value statements are only about the speaker's state of mind (*Abolition* 25-26). Value statements about Coleridge's waterfall can also be true or false. According to Lewis, to say "the waterfall is sublime" is to make a true statement.

Central to distinguishing fact from truth is the idea of interpretation. Claims Duriez, "there is an interpretive dimension to all facts" (*C. S. Lewis* 136). In other words, the human experience of the external world involves a subjective dimension. The facts are objective, but we the knowers are subjective. Between us and the real lies the bridge

of interpretation. What we think about the externally real, the meaning we assign to it, or, in the case of Coleridge's water fall, find in it, is an act of interpretation. Lewis says so himself in *Surprised by Joy*: referring to his father he writes, "Sometimes, indeed, he took in the facts you had stated; but truth fared none the better for that. What are facts without interpretation?" (121). There is fact, or reality. There are the statements we make about reality. We make these statements from thinking about reality. Our thoughts about what reality is really like are always interpretive, and this is so simply because they are *our* thoughts and not reality *itself*. They are a step back from the real.

"Myth Became Fact" clearly separates truth from fact (66), as do *Miracles* (27) and the passage just quoted in *Surprised* (121). Additionally there is the first footnote to chapter fifteen of *Miracles* in which truth can only come down to the world of history, of fact, by a process of humiliation (177*n*.). But even in this latter passage some ambiguity emerges in the relationship between fact and truth. The Hebrews had a mythology chosen for them by God "to be the vehicle of the earliest sacred truths, the first step in that process which ends in the New Testament where truth has become completely historical" (176*n*.); that is, truth has entered the realm of facts, of events.

Truth involves searching and uncovering. Truth is distinct from reality but enters the world of fact. In addition to these conclusions, one can add two more qualities. First, though Lewis would grant subjectivity, finiteness, and difficulties to the knower, he nevertheless believed that truth was objective, since it involved making statements about an objective reality. Of Christians Lewis said, "we are coming to be almost the only people who appeal to the buried (but not dead) human appetite for the objective truth . . ."

("Modern Man" 66). Of his contemporaries Lewis complained,

> One of the great difficulties is to keep before the audience's mind the question of Truth. They always think you are recommending Christianity not because it is *true* but because it is *good*. [ . . . ] One must keep on pointing out that Christianity is a statement which, if false, is of *no* importance, and, if true, of infinite importance. ("Christian Apologetics" 101)

Lewis "argues for Christianity not because he finds it good but because he finds it objectively true. He argues for the moral law and other standards of values as well because he believes they are also objective reality" (Honda xiii).

II. A Natural Epistemology

Certain concepts are essential to knowing. First, obviously, a knower is required, as well as something to be known. Next comes reason. Lewis regularly defends the legitimacy of reasoned thought (against naturalists/materialists who reduce man to an unthinking machine) by pointing out the obvious: "The forces discrediting reason, themselves depend on reasoning" ("Bulverism" 274). Simply put, without reason there can be no truth. Another concept is still needed for any genuine knowing. Lewis quotes Sir Arthur Eddington in *Miracles*: "we sometimes have convictions which we cherish but cannot justify; we are influenced by some innate sense of the fitness of things" (138). Some truths are self-evident. This is the conclusion Lewis draws about the *Tao*, but the application to knowing is wider. About these moral principles he says, "You cannot reach them as conclusions: they are premises" (*Abolition* 53). But they are not irrational;

they are "rationality itself–as things so obviously reasonable that they neither demand nor admit proof" (53). The point of this foundational element in knowing is that if "nothing is self-evident, nothing can be proved" (53).

Lewis comes closest to stating a complete epistemology in two passages, but even in these, however, he leaves out important elements he supplies elsewhere. The first passage is in "Religion: Reality or Substitute?":

> Authority, reason, experience; on these three, mixed in varying proportions all our knowledge depends. The authority of many wise men in many different times and places forbids me to regard the spiritual world as an illusion. My reason, showing me the apparently insoluble difficulties of materialism and proving that the hypothesis of a spiritual world covers far more of the facts with far fewer assumptions, forbids me again. My experience even of such feeble attempts as I have made to live the spiritual life does not lead to the results which the pursuit of an illusion ordinarily leads to, and therefore forbids me yet again. I am not now saying that no one's reason and no one's experience produce different results. I am only trying to put the whole problem the right way round, to make it clear that the value given to the testimony of any feeling must depend on our whole philosophy, not our whole philosophy on a feeling. If those who deny the spiritual world prove their case on general grounds, then, indeed, it will follow that our apparently spiritual experiences *must* be an illusion; but equally, if we are right, it will follow that they are the prime reality and

> that our natural experiences are a second best. And let us note that whichever view we embrace, mere feeling will continue to assault our conviction. (41)

Reason is a part of this equation seen before, as is "experience" in the form of "facts" or "reality." "Authority" is new to the equation, but its importance will be clarified in several passages to come. Each of these working together leads to truth. One new element is to be treated cautiously in any natural epistemology, and that is "feeling." Lewis says feeling is seldom an accurate indicator of truth and must be treated warily. Feeling is nevertheless important to the knowing process as will be shown later in this chapter.

The second natural epistemology is outlined in "Why I am Not a Pacifist." Here Lewis calls the epistemological process a "train of reason":

> Now any concrete train of reasoning involves three elements: *Firstly*, there is the reception of facts to reason about. These facts are received either from our own senses, or from the report of other minds; that is, either experience or authority supplies us with our material. But each man's experience is so limited that the second source is the more usual; of every hundred facts upon which to reason, ninety-nine depend on authority. *Secondly*, there is the direct, simple act of the mind perceiving self-evident truth, as when we see that if A and B both equal C, then they equal each other. This act I call intuition. *Thirdly*, there is an art or skill of arranging the facts so as to yield a series of such intuitions which linked together

> produce a proof of the truth or falsehood of the proposition we are considering. Thus in a geometrical proof each step is seen by intuition, and to fail to see it is to be not a bad geometrician but an idiot. The skill comes in arranging the material into a series of intuitable "steps." Failure to do this does not mean idiocy, but only lack of ingenuity or invention. Failure to follow it need not mean idiocy, but either inattention or a defect of memory which forbids us to hold all the intuitions together. (34)

Here all the elements are present: fact, the experience of fact, "authority" (the telling of facts), self-evident truth (called "intuition"), and reason. In these concepts can be found Lewis's complete natural epistemology.

In *The Great Divorce* the purpose of reason is made clear. When the intellectual ghost is promised his thirst will be quenched, he replies that he is not thirsty for "some ready-made truth which puts an end to intellectual activity" (43). What he wants is "free play of Mind" (44). The "White Spirit" tells the ghost he will be free to drink but not to continue to be dry. This statement makes no sense to the ghost, so the Spirit explains: "Once you were a child. Once you knew what inquiry was for. There was a time when you asked questions because you wanted answers, and were glad when you had found them" (44). The intellectual ghost had become in love with thinking for its own sake; his glorified counterpart explains that the purpose of reasoning is to find truth.

In "Bulverism," Lewis defines the "criterion of truth":

> A mountainous country might have several maps made of it, only one of which was a *true* one, i. e. corresponding with the actual contours.

> The map drawn by Reason claims to be that *true* one. I couldn't get at the universe unless I could trust my reason. If we couldn't trust inference we could know nothing but our own existence. Physical reality is an *inference* from sensations. (277)

Between objective reality and our intellectual apprehension of it stand our empirical faculties–the senses. Lewis understood the problem of the subjective self's ability to know accurately, but he also believed that reason, the ability to make inferences from our sensations, could connect what we perceive of reality with our understanding of it.

By far Lewis's most complete discussion of reason is in chapter three of *Miracles*. There he defines reason and proves that a naturalist system cannot account for it. Reason is a human quality, the source of which is above purely physical nature. Lewis begins his argument with the same ideas in the previous quote: "It is clear that everything we know, beyond our immediate sensations, is inferred from those sensations" (*Miracles* 22-23). He does not mean we do this beginning in childhood. He means that, if ever we come to confront the issue of existence philosophically, we will take our argument for it from our sensations: "Since I am presented with colours, sounds, shapes, pleasures and pains which I cannot perfectly predict or control, and since the more I investigate them the more regular their behavior appears, therefore there must exist something other than myself and it must be systematic" (23). So goes the argument for reality. Lewis's point from this is that all people can possibly know depends on reasoning. If our inferences are accurate conclusions drawn from our senses then we can know reality. If, however, our reasoning "merely represents the way our minds happen to work–then we can have no

knowledge. Unless human reasoning is valid no science can be true" (23).

Lewis's specific attack against naturalism occurs from this assertion. In a materialist system, thinking is explained as nothing more than the movement of atoms in the brain. But if our beliefs about truth are nothing more than the movement of atoms, we have no reason to believe in anything, including the belief that thinking is nothing more than the movement of atoms in the brain (24). It is a self defeating position.[1]

Lewis used the following example to illustrate the above point. He begins by distinguishing between two uses of the word "because": "We can say, 'Grandfather is ill today *because* he ate lobster yesterday.' We can also say, 'Grandfather must be ill today *because* he hasn't got up yet' (and we know he is an invariably early riser when he is well)" (*Miracles* 24). The first sentence shows a cause and effect relationship. The lobster caused the illness. The second sentence shows a ground and consequent relationship. We 'believe' Grandfather is ill because he is not up yet. So a cause/effect sentence explains why a thing happened, and a ground/consequent sentence explains why we believe in a particular thing.

Now the great twentieth-century mistake about reason is the confusion of cause/effect thinking for ground/consequent thinking (Lewis called this confusion "Bulverism" in the essay by that title). In this approach to thinking, all beliefs are suspected as being merely effects of a particular cause: "You say that *because* (Cause and Effect) you are a capitalist, or a hypochondriac, or a mere man or only a woman" (*Miracles* 26). In other words, all beliefs are the result of psychological processes, activities in the brain. In a cause/effect universe this must be the case. All events are

caused and the act of thinking is an event. But, Lewis says, though they are events, acts of thought "are a very special sort of events. They are 'about' something other than themselves and can be true or false" (27). Events are not true or false. They just *are*. But thoughts about events or facts, though they are real acts of thought, can be true or false.

Thoughts, then, are subjective psychological events, but they must also be seen as "insights into, or knowings of, something other than themselves" (27). To reject this second quality of thinking as "subjective illusion" results in "discrediting all human knowledge" (this is the above-stated naturalist problem regarding thinking). We can "know nothing, beyond our own sensations at the moment unless the act of inference [ground/consequent thinking] is the real insight that it claims to be" (27). Lewis qualifies this by saying that not all inferences will be true, but the ability to infer must be legitimate (27-28).

Lewis goes on to conclude that naturalism cannot offer a theory of human thinking that allows for the genuine act of knowing. If nature is all there is, then reason evolved gradually and its purpose was not to find truth but to improve our responses to stimuli in a system of natural selection (28-29). But to improve responses is not to develop acts of insight: "The relation between response and stimulus is utterly different from that between knowledge and truth known" (29).

Perhaps it was not natural selection that produced reason in man; perhaps it was just experience: "Repeated experience of finding fire (or the remains of fire) where he had seen smoke would condition a man to expect fire whenever he saw smoke. The

expectation, expressed in the form 'If smoke, then fire' becomes what we call inference. Have all our inferences originated in that way?" (30). If so, they are not valid inferences. Experience will train us to associate smoke with fire in the same way that it would train us to "expect that all swans would be white (until they saw a black one)" (30). Expectations like these are not inferences. Reason only occurs when we realize that smoke and fire are connected and then go on to discover what the connection is (30-31). Naturalism can offer no explanation for reasoning that results in true insight. The most important addition to an understanding of reason from *Miracles* is that it is not simply an animal response to external stimuli (reality), but is an attempt to know reality, to understand what it is.

One more issue must be considered before leaving this natural epistemology. Twice Lewis discusses the relationship between faith and reason. One instance is the essay "On Obstinacy in Belief" (17). The other develops the same ideas as the first:

> in general we are shy of speaking plain about Faith as a virtue. It looks so like praising an intention to believe what you want to believe in the face of evidence to the contrary: the American in the old story defined Faith as 'the power of believing what we know to be untrue'. Now I define faith as the power of continuing to believe what we once honestly thought to be true until cogent reasons for honestly changing our minds are brought before us. The difficulty of such continuing to believe is constantly ignored or misunderstood in discussions of this subject. It is always assumed that the difficulties of faith are intellectual difficulties, that a man

> who has once accepted a certain proposition will automatically go on believing it till real grounds for disbelief occur. Nothing could be more superficial. How many of the freshmen who come up to Oxford from religious homes and lose their Christianity in the first year have been honestly *argued* out of it? How many of our own sudden temporary losses of faith have a rational basis which would stand examination for a moment? [ . . . ]
>
> When we exhort people to Faith as a virtue, to the settled intention of continuing to believe certain things, we are not exhorting them to fight against reason. The intention of continuing to believe is required because, though Reason is divine, human reasoners are not. When once passion takes part in the game, the human reason, unassisted by Grace, has about as much chance of retaining its hold on truths already gained as a snowflake has of retaining its consistency in the mouth of a blast furnace. ("Religion: Reality or Substitute?" 42-43)

A more careful look at the faculty of imagination will subsequently show that faith does not war so much against reason as it does against sight.[2]

Lewis's epistemology does not end on the natural level. He fully believed in an extra dimension to knowing, one best summarized in the word 'revelation.'

III. Supernatural Epistemology

Studying Lewis's supernatural epistemology involves turning to kinds of *revealed* knowledge, kinds not handed down *a priori* but through human experience of the

supernatural. The first point to be made about revelation is that it stands in contrast to normal experience. The second point is that it nevertheless has an association with the experiential. Revelation comes to us through an experience. Says Lewis in "Bulverism," "Knowledge by revelation is more like empirical than rational knowledge" (277). Next, as with experience, revelation also has a correspondence/non-correspondence to reason: "The Church claims to be the bearer of a revelation [. . . .] If it is true, then we should expect to find in the church an element which unbelievers will call irrational and which believers will call supra-rational. There ought to be something in it opaque to our reason though not contrary to it . . ." ("Priestesses in the Church" 238).

Some kinds of revelation are more direct, more complete in Lewis's thinking; some are more objective, others more subjective. Myth includes Divine revelation that is less direct and tending toward the subjective (see chapter four). Several passages previously quoted show how myth is related to truth (see "Myth Became Fact" 66, *Miracles* 176-77, and *Pilgrim's Regress* 169). The *Miracles* passage defines myth as "a real though unfocused gleam of divine truth falling on human imagination" (176*n*.). The words 'unfocused' and 'gleam' suggest that God's revelation in myth is only partial. This explains Lewis's perspective on world religions:

> If you are a Christian you do not have to believe that all the other religions are simply wrong all through [. . .] you are free to think that all these religions, even the queerest ones, contain at least some hint of the truth [ . . .] But, of course, being a Christian does mean thinking that where Christianity differs from other religions, Christianity is right and they are

wrong. (*Mere Christianity* 31)

In *Pilgrim's Regress*, Lewis argues that God reveals Himself to man first through the Moral Law (the intuition of the *Tao*), then partially through the myths of world religions (which, though clouded, yet uncover glimpses of truth), then more completely in the Jewish Law (146-48). The Incarnation of Christ, then, is the complete and objective revelation of God (*Miracles* 176*n.*).

Lewis cites as a possible example of partial revelation in myth the monotheism of Akhenaten. Perhaps, Lewis suggests, even Moses was first exposed to monotheism through the Egyptian king's teachings (though there is no evidence of this) (*Reflections on the Psalms* 74). Lewis calls this partial revelation of the true God in the pagan myth "second utterances" (92). He even hopes that "this lonely ancient king, crank and doctrinaire though perhaps he was, has long seen and now enjoys the truth which so far transcends his own glimpse of it" (76). This hope for Akhenaten Lewis also has for Plato, Virgil, and other "myth-makers" (90-91), whom he imagined as greeting the complete truth in the afterlife with words like, "I see . . . so that was what I was really talking about. Of course. That is what my words really meant, and I never knew it" (91). Tolkien defined myth similarly: "We have come from God [ . . . ], and inevitably the myths woven by us, though they contain error, will also reflect a splintered fragment of the true light, the eternal truth that is with God" (Carpenter 147).

Myth, in the context of revelation, consists of stories in the human imagination which are touched by a divine gleam and bear glimpses of truth. This is not a complete definition of myth (see chapter four) but serves the present context. Lewis's supernatural

epistemology includes intuitions of the *Tao* and the partial revelation of truth in myths born in the human imagination.

God reveals Himself in intuitions and stories, but He also reveals Himself supernaturally in objective reality by miraculous appearance or speech (for example, to Moses out of the burning bush, or to Paul on the road to Damascus). Lewis mentions this kind of direct objective revelation only once, in the essay "Religion Without Dogma." He suggests, if God "can be known it will be by self-revelation on His part, not by speculation on ours. We, therefore, look for Him where it is claimed that He has revealed Himself by miracle, by inspired teachers, by enjoined ritual" (144). Ritual is discussed under supernatural epistemology by mystical experience at the end of this sub-section. Lewis claims, though, that God sometimes reveals Himself very directly, not just by the hints or intimations heretofore discussed. Lewis never comments as to whether or not such appearances continue today, though perhaps the verb form "has revealed" in the quote above suggests a condition beginning in the past and continuing into the present. He does, however, say that such appearances are recorded in the Bible; it is to this source of revelation we now turn.

In Lewis's thinking, the Bible is at times mythic, at times historical, at times propositional, and at times poetic. Scripture should be placed into several positions in the epistemological model. It will have a place in the authority portion of the natural epistemology and therefore connections to experience (it contains reported facts) and reason (reason is deliberation about facts). It also has a prominent place in supernatural epistemology as a record of God's revelation to man; however, Lewis believed the

revelations in scripture to be varied in kind and directness.

Lewis's view of the biblical texts can be gleaned throughout his corpus. Occasionally he makes specific statements. As a first hint there is the reference in *Miracles* to the mythology of the Hebrews: "the mythology chosen by God to be the vehicle of the earliest sacred truths, the first step in that process which ends in the New Testament where truth has become completely historical" (176*n*.). Between myth and history lies the beginning of the Old Testament which is mythic but myth given by God (see *Pilgrim's Regress* 169), and the New Testament where Lewis would say that the Gospel accounts are historical narratives. Lewis believed the Old Testament became progressively more historical so that, for example, he thought accounts of King David's court in Second Samuel to be "as reliable as the court history of Louis XIV" ("Answers to Questions on Christianity" 58).

Lewis makes a few tentative suggestions regarding a methodology of biblical interpretation in a letter to Clyde Kilby:

> To me the curious thing is that neither in my own Bible-reading nor in my religious life as a whole does the question *in fact* ever assume that importance which it always gets in theological controversy. The difference between reading the story of Ruth and that of Antigone–both first class as literature–is to me unmistakable and even overwhelming. But the question "Is Ruth historical?" (I've no reason to suppose it is *not*) doesn't really seem to arise till afterwards. It can still act on me as the Word of God if it weren't, so far as I can see. All Holy Scripture is written

for our learning. But learning of *what*? I should have thought the value of some things (e. g. The Resurrection) depended on whether they really happened, but the value of others (e. g. the fate of Lot's wife) hardly at all. And the ones whose historicity matters are, as God's will, those where it is plain . . .

Whatever view we hold on the divine authority of Scripture must make room for the following facts.

1. The distinction which St. Paul makes in I Cor vii between ουκ εγω αλλ ο Κυριοσ (v.10) ανδ εγω λεγω, ουκ ο κυριοσ (v. 12).[3]

2. The apparent inconsistencies between the genealogies in Matt i and Luke iii: with the accounts of the death of Judas in Matt xxvii 5 and Acts i. 18-19.

3. St. Luke's own account of how he obtained his matter (i. 1-4).

4. The universally admitted unhistoricity (I do not say, of course, falsity) of at least some narratives in Scripture (the parables), which may well extend also to Jonah and Job.

5. If every good and perfect gift comes from the Father of Lights then all true and edifying writings, whether in Scripture or not, must be *in some sense* inspired.

6. John xi. 49-52. Inspiration may operate in a wicked man without his knowing it, and he can then utter the untruth he intends (propriety of making an innocent man a political scapegoat) *as well as* the

> truth he does not intend (the divine sacrifice).
>
> It seems to me 2 and 4 rule out the view that every statement in Scripture must be *historical* truth. And 1, 3, 5, and 6 rule out the view that inspiration is a single thing in the sense that, if present at all, it is always present in the same mode and the same degree. Therefore, I think, rules out the view that inspiration is a single thing in the sense that, if present at all, it is always present in the same sense as any other: e.g. that the numbers of O.T. Armies (which in view of the size of the country, if true, involve continuous miracle) are statistically correct because the story of the Resurrection is historically correct. That the over-all operation of Scripture is to convey God's Word to the reader (he also needs his inspiration) who reads it in the right spirit, I fully believe. That it *also* gives true answers to all the questions (often religiously irrelevant) which he might ask, I don't. The very *kind* of truth we are often demanding was, in my opinion, not even envisaged by the ancients. (*Letters* 7 May 1959, 479-80)

This passage suggests the following epistemological points and methods: The Bible contains God's message. It is intended for our learning but is not an encyclopedia and should not be read in a tech-manual-for-Christians fashion. Some of the Biblical stories must be historical (like the resurrection) if the truth claims of Christianity are to be held valid; others do not matter. Different parts of the Bible should be read differently, but the overall purpose is to communicate God's message to mankind. This can be done

successfully but only through God's inspiring the act of reading and right attitude on the part of the reader. Finally, the Bible will not answer every question one might have because the "very *kind* of truth we are often demanding was [. . .] not even envisaged by the ancients" (*Letters* 80).

Lewis's supernatural epistemology includes revelation via intuition, myth, and scripture. But God's most objective and most complete revelation of Himself is Himself. In *Miracles* Lewis labeled the Incarnation the central miracle of Christianity (143). Recall from chapter two that Payne warned against making God an abstraction; she prefered even the problems of anthropomorphizing God over making the more serious mistake of abstracting Him (17-18). God's own answer to the problem is to make Word into flesh (see John 1.14). What matters most to human knowing is contact with reality, and the Incarnation is humanity's best opportunity on earth to know the most concrete Reality of all. Scripture is humanity's most direct revelation from God, until, that is, He comes to speak to mankind Himself. Admittedly, the life of Christ is now mediated to people through the Bible, but the actual Incarnation and Christ's subsequent time on earth are unlike any connection to God mankind has ever had. Christ is the true myth. From this myth we may derive abstract statements of truth, better known as doctrines. As Lewis says to Arthur Greeves, "The 'doctrines' we get *out of* the true myth are of course *less* true: they are translations into our *concepts* and *ideas* of that wh. God has already expressed in a language more adequate, namely the actual incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection" (*Letters to Greeves* 18 October 1931, 428).

From myth to scripture to the Incarnation the current exploration has proceeded

from least clear and complete revelation to that which is most clear and complete. Now, however, comes the final category in the supernatural epistemology, one which is very subjective and may vary in clarity and completeness. In his ways of knowing, Lewis includes mystical experiences in many varieties, including (at least) the following five.

Lewis mentions dreams and visions only in his fictional works (see *Till We Have Faces* 249 and *The Silver Chair* 119-20, for example), but there is biblical precedent for these kinds of mystical revelations. The most significant appearance of dreams as revelation in Lewis's works revolves around the story of Jane Studdock in *That Hideous Strength*. Jane's dreams come true (65-67). That is, she sees events in her dreams that have actually taken place or will soon happen, though they occur far from her personal experiences and contain the kinds of bizarre elements people often find in their own dreams.

Another kind of mystical experience may come through ritual. God reveals Himself "by miracle, by inspired teachers, by enjoined ritual" ("Religion Without Dogma" 144). One ritual he is likely referring to is the Eucharist or Holy Communion. The significance Lewis places on sacrament was discussed in chapter two. One can here infer on Lewis's part a belief that, in the Eucharist, a mystical relationship is being lived which includes an aspect of revelation. Lewis hints at a similar activity in the relationship between husbands and wives as living models of Christ's relationship to the church. Lewis calls the relationship "mystical" ("Priestesses in the Church" 238).

A third variety, one that appears, again, only in Lewis's fiction, is the idea of "presence." In *Perelandra*, it is the weight of a silent presence which nevertheless fills

Ransom's mind with messages that move Ransom to right action against the Un-man. Fourth is the phenomenon called speaking in tongues or glossolalia which is the impetus for the "Transposition" essay (see chapter two).

Finally, there is the knowing that comes through the revelation of Joy. When we experience beauty in nature or literature we get a glimpse of Divine Beauty. But we are never taught to have these experiences; rather we come upon them intuitively. Joy belongs in a mystical category, because of certain language in "The Weight of Glory." Lewis describes the human experience of beauty as that of "mere spectators. Beauty has smiled, but not to welcome us; her face was turned in our direction, but not to see us" (14). The language Lewis uses may be metaphorical, but he clearly sees beauty, God's glory, as passing into the world and then out. People can occasionally see its movement. As such, it is a revelation of God and its purpose is to draw us to God.

The facts of reality come through a variety of interconnected methods: experience, reason, authority, intuition, and revelation (by myth, scripture, God's Incarnation, and subjective mystical experience). Together these make up the basis of a Lewisian epistemology. But there is more to learn.[4]

## IV. Truth and Imagination

### A First Look at a Key Epistemological Problem

Lewis's signals are mixed on the relationship between truth and imagination. He clearly associates reason with truth. Chapter four will show that he clearly associates imagination with myth. One of the concluding tasks of chapter six will be to explore the relationship between truth and imagination. If no other connection exists, imagination

and truth still have in common the issue of knowing. Each contributes to the epistemological process in some way. This sub-section explores some possible connections between truth and imagination.

A connection between reason and imagination may be inferred from a comment Lewis makes about art. In *The Great Divorce* a glorified man is speaking to an artist friend who has come on the bus from the grey city: "When you painted on earth [. . .] it was because you caught glimpses of Heaven in the earthly landscape. The success of your painting was that it enabled others to see glimpses too" (80). In the strictest sense of the vocabulary as used thus far, this example shows how art can glimpse reality, not truth. But of course truth is *about* reality and so to glimpse a more perfect reality is to approach a more perfectly true knowledge of it.

In "The Language of Religion," Lewis comes very close to saying truth is to be found in imaginative constructs. According to Lewis, there are three kinds of language: scientific, ordinary, and poetic (129). The language people use to express their religious beliefs is neither scientific nor theological (which is similar to scientific language), but ranges between ordinary and poetic (135). Theological language abstracts God; the Bible is more metaphorical than theology is comfortable with recognizing (137). Furthermore, most life experiences cannot be "communicated by precise and literal language" (138). The normal state of experience cannot be communicated by scientific language. Lewis concludes: "The very essence of our life as conscious beings, all day and every day, consists of something which cannot be communicated except by hints, similes, metaphors, and the use of those emotions (themselves not very important) which are

pointers to it" (140). Much of human experience can only be communicated by poetic language. If truth consists of propositions that correspond to reality, and many of those statements are poetic, then it follows that poetic language (if not literature itself) may carry truth. And if the language of poetry is the language of imagination (it is not the language of reason), then imagination carries truth. This essay, at least, is the strongest evidence of this conclusion so far.

From truth and the arts one next turns to more specific considerations of truth and imagination. Again, however, this sub-section represents only the first round of negotiations between these warring factions in Lewis's thought (and in Lewis criticism). Coleridge's waterfall was the first hint that there might be imaginative truth. Aesthetic statements are truth statements (*Abolition* 25-26). It is true that a statement about a waterfall is a statement about something in objective reality, but to say that it is sublime is qualitative and evaluative. It denotes a relationship between the object and the quality we call beauty. Beauty, though, is a quality perceived more by imagination than reason (though reason need not be excluded altogether: certain qualities of beauty–perspective, ratio, arrangement–can be apprehended by reason). Thus one may infer that imagination and truth are connected.

In addition to inference, though, there are texts in Lewis that make direct connections between truth and imagination. In a critically important passage in *Pilgrim's Regress*, John hears the voice of God saying that the mythology which He is presenting is "truth, not fact: an image, not the very real. [. . .] this is the veil under which I have chosen to appear even from the first until now. For this end I made your senses and for

this end your imagination, that you might see My face and live" (169). Truth and image are associated together in the first line and contrasted to fact and reality. As was mentioned before, though, Lewis's thinking on the relationship between myth and reality may have changed. As noted in chapters one and two, in the "Myth Became Fact" essay, Lewis says myth reveals reality, not truth (66). The solution to this inconsistency lies in Lewis's applying multiple meanings for the word "truth" (see chapters four and five). In the context of human experience on earth, truth refers to abstract statements about reality, but in the context of heaven, truth becomes a synonym for reality–it takes on the quality of being concrete.

Another reference possibly connecting truth and imagination, one in which "truth" is used in the context of heaven, occurs in *Surprised by Joy*: "I do not think the resemblance between the Christian and the merely imaginative experience is accidental. I think that all things, in their way, reflect heavenly truth, the imagination not least" (167). Here imagination at least *reflects* heavenly truth if it does not bear it.

In *The Great Divorce*, George MacDonald, the glorified being who acts as guide to the Lewis persona (the narrator), explains to Lewis that time is the only lens he can look through to see eternity and not distort his knowledge of freedom. Of the lens of time MacDonald says, "The picture is a symbol: but it's truer than any philosophical theorem (or, perhaps, than any mystic's vision) that claims to go behind it" (125). This phrase is more definite than any before. The picture or symbol contains truth. It is truer than any philosophical theorem, any abstract statement. It is also truer than any mystic's vision. At first glance this passage appears to contrast an image and an idea, and, where ideas are

normally truth statements, this text is suggesting an instance where an image is truer than an idea. But such an interpretation breaks down with the reference to another kind of image, that of the mystic. As was learned from *Miracles* (209), mystical vision can take us to the place where imagination touches spirit but is still only metaphor, but in the full reality beyond, where spirit is utterly concrete, the image *is* the thing. Mystical vision cannot yet see that 'high.' The picture or symbol being spoken of in *The Great Divorce*, then, is something beyond imagination. It is more true than truth statements *or* images. MacDonald says that the lens (the picture or symbol) through which we look at eternity is time. But time is not an image in the normal sense of human imagination. Time is a quality of reality. It has Lewis's 'facthood.' It is true not as an image of eternity, but because it is real, and looking through this reality at a higher reality behind it, even if the higher turns the lower into 'picture' or 'symbol' by sheer comparison, will still yield greater truth than any abstract idea or vision (even a mystical one) in the human imagination. Through the lens of time, (which, though real, is but a symbol for eternity) one can see how human will is genuinely free though part of a grand design.

The *Great Divorce* passage offers an instance in which an image can get the knower closer to higher reality than any abstract statements formulated by reason. A similar instance was shown in *Miracles* where Lewis suggested that metaphor might depict heaven and God more accurately than abstract statement (122-23). But unlike in the *Great Divorce* passage where the "lens" for seeing is the reality of time, in the *Miracles* passage, the lens for seeing is the human imagination. The purpose of reason is to help one match one's thoughts to reality so that the yield is truth. If this is so, then

from the *Miracles* passage one may be able to conclude the same for imagination. Lewis, thus, contrasts reason's inability to *know* with imagination's ability to bring the knower to real knowledge of higher realities. Even if the metaphors are imperfect, they come closer to reality than reasoned ideas. Imagination helps knowers to match their thoughts to realities reason is unable to fathom, and the yield is truth.

In the *Miracles* quote, Lewis says human beings are themselves metaphors in comparison to God. This recalls the *Divorce* passage in which time was the lens, the symbol through which to see eternity. Time, though a metaphor for eternity, allows us to see eternity better than either reason or imagination. Paradoxically, the making of image or metaphor (both are representations) in the imagination allows us to see higher realities because we ourselves are the metaphor, the lens through which we glimpse those realities. Somehow, the *act* of making metaphor (the imaginative act) is metaphorical, is being ourselves-as-lens for seeing reality *and* knowing it in a way that abstract thinking cannot.

A passage in *Letters to Malcolm* may serve as the best conclusion one can draw about truth and imagination at this point:

> This talk of "meeting" is, no doubt, anthropomorphic; as if God and I could be face to face, like two fellow-creatures, when in reality He is above me and within me and below me and all about me. That is why it must be balanced by all manner of metaphysical and theological abstractions. But never, here or anywhere else, let us think that while anthropomorphic images are a concession to our weakness, the abstractions are the literal truth. Both are equally concessions; each singly

> misleading, and the two together mutually corrective. Unless you sit to it very lightly, continually murmuring "Not thus, not thus, neither is this Thou," the abstraction is fatal. It will make the life of lives inanimate and the love of loves impersonal. The *naif* image is mischievous chiefly in so far as it holds unbelievers back from conversion. It does believers, even at its crudest, no harm. What soul ever perished for believing that God the Father really has a beard? (21-22)

Here neither images nor abstractions are "literal truth." Neither way of thinking, taken alone, gets at who or what God *really is*, but taken together the two ways are "mutually corrective."

What is immediately important, though, is that Lewis offers an addition to the epistemological system. The passage from *Malcolm* is in part methodological. Since neither reason nor imagination alone can know God, each must participate in knowing; each must add to and correct the other. Thus, Lewis sees imagination as at least participating in the epistemological process.

A major problem, however, with drawing any definite conclusion about the relationship between truth and imagination is a puzzling passage at the end of "Bluspels and Flalansferes":

> But it must not be supposed that I am in any sense putting forward the imagination as the organ of truth. We are not talking of truth, but of meaning: meaning which is the antecedent condition both of truth and falsehood, whose antithesis is not error but nonsense. I am a rationalist.

> For me, reason is the natural organ of truth; but imagination is the organ of meaning. Imagination, producing new metaphors or revivifying old, is not the cause of truth, but its condition. It is, I confess, undeniable that such a view indirectly implies a kind of truth or rightness in the imagination itself. I said at the outset that the truth we won by metaphor could not be greater than the truth of the metaphor itself; and we have seen since that all our truth, or all but a few fragments, is won by metaphor. And thence, I confess, it does follow that if our thinking is ever true, then the metaphors by which we think must have been good metaphors. (157-58)

First Lewis dashes the present conclusions by saying imagination is not the organ of truth. Then he confuses the reader by adding a new term to the equation: "meaning." Then he provides brief hope of understanding, saying there is a "kind" of truth in imagination, only to subsequently leave the reader without an explanation of what is meant by this latter statement. To understand what Lewis does mean here requires a study of his distinction between the words "meaning" and "truth" and a fuller understanding of what he means by imagination.

## V. Truth and the Individual

"Finally, as will soon be apparent to any reader, this [book] is not what is called an 'apologetic' work. [ . . . ] A man can't be always defending the truth; there must be a time to feed on it" (*Reflections* 14). Lewis notes in his introduction to *Reflections on the Psalms* that there is a personal element to the search for truth. Finding truth is important for people individually, practically, and spiritually. It is something we must feed on. In

*The Abolition of Man*, Lewis argues that personal responses are a part of knowing truth, especially the truth of the *Tao*. His complaint against Gaius and Titius is that they remove meaning from the equation of truth altogether:

> To say that the cataract [Coleridge's waterfall] is sublime means saying that our emotion of humility is appropriate or ordinate to the reality, and thus to speak of something else besides the emotion: just as to say that a shoe fits is to speak not only of shoes but of feet. But this reference to something beyond the emotion is what Gaius and Titius exclude from every sentence containing a predicate of value. Such statements, for them, refer solely to the emotion. Now the emotion, thus considered by itself, cannot be either in agreement or disagreement with Reason. It is irrational not as a paralogism is irrational, but as a physical event is irrational: it does not rise even to the dignity of error. On this view, the world of facts, without one trace of value, and the world of feelings without one trace of truth or falsehood, justice or injustice, confront one another, and no *rapprochement* is possible. (*Abolition* 30-31)

Lewis goes on to say that the point of education is to train the student in appropriate responses, intellectual and emotional, to the world in which he lives.

Truth sometimes cannot be known because of presupposed falsehoods about the nature of reality. In the essays "Behind the Scenes," "The Seeing Eye," and "Transposition," Lewis contends that the ability to know spiritual reality depends first on the belief in the reality of spiritual realms. Thus, one's presuppositions will affect one's

ability to know any truth.

A frequent topic of discussion for Lewis is self knowledge. Often those forces within which keep us from knowing truth manage even to keep us from knowing truth about ourselves. Implicit in this belief is the existence of an objective self. But we are not merely subjective knowers *about* reality, we are objective people *in* reality. There is a real self that is my-self and my subjective knowledge of that self may be accurate, misguided, or self deceiving. Self knowledge is possible: "When a man is getting better he understands more and more clearly the evil that is still left in him" (*Mere Christianity* 79; see also "The Trouble with 'X'. . ." 153). Lewis, however, spends much more time on the difficulties of self knowledge: "When a man is getting worse, he understands his own badness less and less" (*Mere* 79).

Lewis says that it is not "our fault that we cannot tell the real truth about ourselves; the persistent, life long, inner murmur of spite, jealousy, prurience, greed and self-complacence simply will not go into words" (*Problem* 60). He goes on to say that the deeper "error and sin" are, "the less their victim suspects their existence; they are masked evil" (92). What awakens the victim to the existence of error and sin is evil in the world:

> Until the evil man finds evil unmistakably present in his existence, in the form of pain, he is enclosed in illusion. Once pain has aroused him, he knows that he is in some way or other "up against" the real universe: he either rebels [ . . . ] or else makes some attempt at an adjustment, which, if pursued, will lead him to religion. (95)

Pain will lead to either "final and unrepented rebellion" or to redemption. Notice that reality ("the real universe") is the epistemological agent which makes self knowledge possible. Pain awakens one to an accurate knowledge of reality, and this knowledge of what surrounds one, what one is really a part of, makes possible the knowledge of one's inner self.

The passages above from *The Problem of Pain* are a perfect summary of Orual's story in *Till We Have Faces*. She lives a victim's illusion because of her ugliness and her loss of Psyche. The illusion is a failure to understand her own selfishness and greed. Her response, upon confronting the god, is to rebel, to escape into the duties of her Queen of Glome persona divorced from the emotional turmoil of her Orual persona (211). When the gods finally confront her with her true nature, she allows the Orual self to re-emerge, and she writes her complaint against the gods (243-45). It is then, when she feels her recalled pain again (247), that Orual is made by the gods to know her self-deceptions. Self knowledge comes first in the form of Ansit's revealing to Orual her selfish love for Bardia, Ansit's husband (262-65). Orual describes the process: "And now those divine Surgeons had me tied down and were at work. My anger protected me only for a short time; anger wearies itself out and truth comes in. For it was all true–truer than Ansit could know" (266). When Orual finally confronts the gods, she does so not by reading the book she has written but the book of her true self, the self she now completely knows (290-94). The illusion is over, as is the rebellion. Pain has led her to redemption.

At issue is the difficulty that the subjective self faces in knowing truth. In addition to the causes within the self that hinder the discovery of truth, there is also an

external cause. There is a moment in *Perelandra* when Ransom, lost in deep caverns beneath the surface of the planet, is suddenly struck with a cascade of fearful thoughts and doubts. Shortly thereafter the Un-man reappears, and Ransom realizes that the "evil thoughts" which he had experienced just before "had been poured into his own mind by the enemy's will" (181). Thus, we see that created, immaterial reality also influences our thoughts, just as created, material reality does.

*The Screwtape Letters* explores how demonic forces may work to keep human beings from knowing any truth, especially about themselves. The first tactic is to sidestep reason and truth completely: "Jargon, not argument, is your best ally in keeping him from the Church. Don't waste time trying to make him think that materialism is *true*! Make him think it is strong or stark or courageous--that it is the philosophy of the future" (8). This tactic works well for obscuring truth about both reality and the self. Screwtape's ultimate goal is to bring a person "to a condition in which he can practice self-examination for an hour without discovering any of those facts about himself which are perfectly clear to anyone who has ever lived in the same house with him or worked in the same office" (16). In other words, Screwtape (and the demonic forces he represents) works not to help us see ourselves as we really are, but to see delusions and illusions, to see ourselves as we want to be seen.

*Perelandra* offers a glimpse of demonic influence which is unlike any known in earthly experience: the reader is allowed to see how the tempter works on the soul of a perfect person, a woman who is as yet entirely free of self-deception. How does temptation work against a person who suffers neither pride, nor fear, nor delusion? The

Un-man attacks Tinidril's (the Perelandrian Queen's) virtue in two ways. First he attacks her by reason, and second by imagination. The second method will be considered in the next chapter. What follows here is a look at how the Un-man attempts to bring about Tinidril's fall through distorted statements about reality. The temptation for the Queen comes in the form of what the nature of genuine pleasure is.

Tinidril, the Queen (the "Eve" of Venus), tells Ransom of the one prohibition on her world. Perelandra is a planet composed almost entirely of seas. Floating on the seas are islands; that is, islands float and move about on the surface of the water. Thus, they move with the waves and storms. There is, however, a "Fixed Land," or what we would call a mountainous island, one with real dirt and "roots." They (she and Tor, the King) are not allowed to spend the night on the "Fixed Land" (74). That real law is what the Un-man (the demon-possessed body of Weston, the physicist enemy of Ransom in *Out of the Silent Planet*) tries to undermine. He begins with a foundational argument: how something unreal–the possibility of spending the night on the Fixed Land–is even worth discussing. The wisdom in it, he says, comes from the world being "made up not only of what is but of what might be. Maleldil knows both and wants us to know both" (104). Thus, he shows that stories have a reality all their own and Maleldil has not prohibited the making of stories. If that is true, he argues, then it is permissible to make a story even about violating Maleldil's prohibition against spending the night on the Fixed Land.

The Un-man's second argument is that, by thinking about what might be, the Queen will be able to teach the King new things so that he will know the varied pleasure of being taught by her (104-105). The Un-man motivates Tinidril by suggesting that her

considering breaking Maleldil's law will bring additional pleasure to her husband. So, here, he appeals to her generosity and selflessness.

In their next encounter, the Queen responds with formidable reason. Although she understands the value of story making she still observes:

> But if I try to make the story about living on the Fixed Island I do not know how to make it about Maleldil. For if I make it that He has changed His command, that will not go. And if I make it that we are living there against His command, that is like making the sky all black and the water so that we cannot drink it and the air so that we cannot breathe it. But also, I do not see what is the pleasure of trying to make these things. (112)

The latter point, again, is key. The Queen is motivated not by selfishness, fear, or pride, but only by the possibility of increased pleasure which, in that perfect world, is an increased good. The Un-man's response is that the pleasure of making the story is increased wisdom, or "becoming older" (113).

This increase comes by the Queen's "branching out," learning new things on her own. Maleldil, says the Un-man, wants her to learn apart from His teaching and that of the King, her husband. The proof of this supposed truth is that she has learned through Ransom and the Un-man and not from Maleldil and the king; thus, concludes the Un-man, Maleldil's "way of making you older is to make you make yourself older" (115). From this conclusion the Un-man argues that to "wait for Maleldil's voice when Maleldil wishes you to walk on your own is a kind of disobedience," and that the "wrong kind of obeying itself can be a disobeying" (116). Tinidril understands this by making an analogy

with a game of chase. An animal that knows she wants to chase after it for pleasure does not obey the normal rule of coming to her; rather, it runs from her. The Un-man applies the analogy to obedience to Maleldil. Perhaps He does not always want her to obey. Perhaps he wants her, sometimes, to run from Him. Tinidril, however, rejects the argument, seeing the flaw in the analogy: "How could our Beloved need to jest or frolic as we do? He is all a burning joy and a strength. It is like thinking that He needed sleep or food" (116). In other words, God (Maleldil) is all pleasure so he does not need to "play" with us.

But it is not a jest, responds the Un-man. Maleldil's real desire for her is that she disobey the law so that she can grow on her own. Of course, Maleldil cannot tell her this because then she would not really be disobeying. The proof lies in the fact that the law has no real good in it, no pleasure. It is not even a law that exists on earth. So, the Un-man concludes, "It is forbidding for the mere sake of forbidding" (117). This law can only have one purpose then: so that the Queen might disobey.

Finally, Ransom interrupts with an alternative interpretation. Perhaps Maleldil made a law that had no pleasure "in order that there might be obedience. In all these other matters what you call obeying Him is but doing what seems good in your own eyes also. [ . . . ] Where can you taste the joy of obeying unless He bids you do something for which His bidding is the only reason?" (118). This seems a fatal blow to the Un-man's attempts, but he has one argument left (before he shifts his mode of attack to the Queen's imagination). He argues that it was Eve's disobedience that allowed Maleldil to become a man and come to Earth (120). Ransom's fevered response includes a claim that greater

good was lost because of Eve's disobedience; moreover, he demands that the Un-man speak the whole truth, that he tell Tinidril of his own joys, of what it profited him when he "made Maleldil and death acquainted" (121). At this, "the body that had been Weston's threw up his head and opened it's mouth and give a long melancholy howl" (122). Subsequently, the Un-man forgoes trying to reason Tinidril into temptation and, instead, begins appealing to her imagination (as chapter four will reveal).

Lewis's most thorough look at the individual and the problem of knowing truth is not in his essays involving epistemology or in his apologetics, but in *That Hideous Strength*. A variety of hindrances to truth are expressed in story form as clear representations of the twentieth-century condition. One thread of focus that runs throughout this lengthy tapestry reveals a brief but telling indictment of the twentieth-century mindset. Lewis's concern for language is pervasive in the novel. His fears for its misuse are frighteningly prophetic of contemporary media, politics, and post-structuralist philosophies born in the last century. In *The Magician's Nephew*, Aslan warns the newly created animals not to act like the dumb beasts they have been elevated above, or they will lose the power of speech (140; see also *The Last Battle* 137). *That Hideous Strength* reveals what happens when human beings pervert the power of language from its purpose of connecting the subjective self to objective reality.

The language theme is present beginning with the title page, where Lewis quotes Sir David Lyndsay's description of the Tower of Babel from *Ane Dialog*: "THE SHADOW OF THAT HYDDEOUS STRENGTH SAX MYLE AND MORE IT IS OF LENGTH." The reference to Babel recalls the story in Genesis where God confuses the

language of men. Such confusion occurs again in *Hideous* but first by human choice, not divine power.

When Mark Studdock first arrives at Belbury, the location of the demonic social-engineering program at the N. I. C. E. (National Institute for Co-ordinated Experiments), he interviews with the Deputy Director, John Wither, who quickly teaches Mark the importance of a philosophy of "elasticity." Wither's method of control is purposeful vagueness. He never allows anyone to know his or her stance in the Institute, even to the point of refusing Mark's request for a job description (54).

For "Fairy" Hardcastle, the director of the N. I. C. E. police, language is about propaganda. She tells Mark that the N. I. C. E. controls most of the newspapers and intends to reshape public opinion about, for example, the punishment of criminals.

> "You've got to get the ordinary man into the state in which he says 'Sadism' automatically when he hears the word Punishment. And then one would have *carte blanche*." Mark did not immediately follow this. But the Fairy pointed out that what had hampered every English police force up to date was precisely the idea of deserved punishment. For desert was always finite: you could do so much to the criminal and no more. Remedial treatment, on the other hand, need have no fixed limit; it could go on till it had effected a cure, and those who were carrying it out would decide when *that* was. And if cure were humane and desirable, how much more prevention? Soon anyone who had ever been in the hands of the police at all would come under the control of the N. I. C. E.; in the end,

every citizen. (69)

As the story progresses, Mark becomes increasingly frustrated with the ambiguity of his position. He determines to confront Wither, but Miss Hardcastle disuades him: "Making things clear is the one thing the D. D. can't stand" (97). Then she assigns Mark a job. He has not been hired to be a sociologist (his true profession), but to write propaganda for the newspapers (98-99). Mark's initial response is one of rejection. If he were to even consider being a journalist, he "should like to be an honest journalist" (100).

Mark eventually finds himself in a conversation with the Fairy and others in which he is called on to write two false newspaper reports on a series of riots engineered by the N. I. C. E. in the city of Edgestow. Says the narrator, "This was the first thing Mark had been asked to do which he himself, before he did it, clearly knew to be criminal. But the moment of his consent almost escaped his notice . . ." (130). The editorials Mark writes favor, of course, the N. I. C. E. Each is written for specific newspapers (one more respectable, the other more popular). Lewis includes both essays in entirety so that the reader can specifically see language used for manipulative, propaganda purposes rather than as a tool for truth-telling. Thus, in the article for the respectable paper, the N. I. C. E. police are contrasted with the "*imperium in imperio*" that has led to the loss of liberty and justice in other countries. They are dissociated from politics completely and better labeled the "Sanitary Executive" of the N. I. C. E. (132). In the article for the popular newspaper, however, the riot blamed on "so-called religious people," "financial interests," or the "old cobweb-spinning professors and philosophers of Edgestow University itself" (134). The poor police cannot possibly deal with an

engineered riot, but "Hats off to Miss Hardcastle and her brave boys, yes, and her brave girls too" for they *can* deal with it and did so successfully (134).

In contrast to the N. I. C. E., which manipulates language for evil ends, are Ransom and his followers at St. Anne's who serve God and the great angels, or eldila, of deep heaven. Midway through the novel, Ransom intends to send a good man, and colleague of Mark, named Dimble to find the newly awakened Merlin (whom the N. I. C. E. have been seeking for his great powers). Ransom tells Dimble that he is to speak a specific command to Merlin. Dimble replies:

> "What shall I say in the Great Tongue?"
>
> "Say that you come in the name of God and all angels and in the power of the planets from one who sits today in the seat of the Pendragon and command him to come with you. Say it now."
>
> And Dimble, who had been sitting with his face drawn, and rather white, between the white faces of the two women, and his eyes on the table, raised his head, and great syllables of words that sounded like castles came out of his mouth. Jane felt her heart leap and quiver at them. Everything else in the room seemed to have been intensely quiet; even the bird, and the bear, and the cat, were still, staring at the speaker. The voice did not sound like Dimble's own: it was as if the words spoke themselves through him from some strong place at a distance–or as if they were not words at all but present operations of God, the planets, and the Pendragon. For this was the language spoken before the Fall and beyond the Moon and

> the meanings were not given to the syllables by chance, or skill, or long tradition, but truly inherent in them as the shape of the great Sun is inherent in the little waterdrop. This was Language herself, as she first sprang at Maleldil's bidding out of the molten quicksilver of the star called Mercury on Earth, but Viritrilbia in Deep Heaven. (228-29)

In his preface to *That Hideous Strength* Lewis says that the point behind the novel is one he wanted to make in *The Abolition of Man* (7). Recall that in *Abolition* Lewis was speaking out against those who claim that the value statements we make about reality are really only expressions of our subjective responses. According to Gaius and Titius, our words do not describe external reality in terms of value. Lewis disagrees wholeheartedly. But in *Hideous* he sees the natural extension of this philosophy. If words cannot describe reality prescriptively, perhaps they cannot describe it descriptively. Perhaps they describe nothing but our own subjective inner selves. Ransom reads the science of his times in this way: "Despair of objective truth had been increasingly insinuated into the scientists, indifference to it, and a concentration upon mere power, had been the result" (203). It is apparent at the novel's end that Wither has dedicated his entire life to rejecting first objective truth and then any objective reality at all (including himself). When he realizes the forces of evil have lost, his response is placid:

> It is incredible how little this knowledge moved him. It could not, because he had long ceased to believe in knowledge itself. What had been in his far-off youth a merely aesthetic repugnance to realities that were crude or vulgar, had deepened and darkened, year after year, into a fixed

> refusal of everything that was in any degree other than himself. He had passed from Hegel into Hume, thence through Pragmatism, and thence through Logical Positivism, and out at last into the complete void. The indicative mood now corresponded to no thought that his mind could entertain. He had willed with his whole heart that there should be no reality and no truth and now even the imminence of his own ruin could not wake him. (353)

In contrast to Wither's utter subjectivity stand Ransom and his people. Ransom affirms the objectivity of not just reality but of language itself. It is born of God and somehow called out of the great eldil or Oyarsa of the planet Mercury. When Dimble speaks the ancient language, it is as if the eldil, perhaps even God, is present in the speaking.

When Merlin finally comes to Ransom of his own accord, he tests Ransom by using the "Old Solar" language. Ransom replies in Old Solar, confirming that he is the Pendragon. Next comes the plan for the destruction of the N. I. C. E. The great eldila–the ruling intelligences of the planets–will descend to Earth and pour their powers into Merlin. He will be their instrument of victory. The first to descend is the angel of language, Mercury:

> Ransom gripped the side of his sofa; Merlin grasped his own knees and set his teeth. [ . . . ] Quick agitation seized them: a kind of boiling and bubbling in mind and heart which shook their bodies also [ . . . . ] It was well that both men had some knowledge of poetry. The doubling, splitting, and recombining of thoughts which now went on in them would

> have been unendurable for one whom that art had not already instructed in the counterpoint of the mind, the mastery of doubled and trebled vision. For Ransom whose study had been for many years in the realm of words, it was heavenly pleasure. He found himself sitting within the very heart of language, in the white-hot furnace of essential speech. All fact was broken, splashed into cataracts, caught, turned inside out, kneaded, slain, and reborn as meaning. For the lord of Meaning himself, the herald, the messenger, the slayer of Argus, was with them: the angel that spins nearest the sun. Viritrilbia, whom men call Mercury and Thoth. (321-22)

That fact is "broken" into meaning is significant to an understanding of truth's relation to fact. The next sub-section will recall this passage in order to discuss its bearing on the subject/object and abstract/concrete dilemmas. The immediate significance of the passage is the thematic emphasis on language and truth running throughout the novel.

After his preparation, Merlin infiltrates the N. I. C. E. under pretense of being a translator (the Institute has mistaken a transient, whose clothes Merlin took upon his awakening, for the wizard himself, but their Merlin is unresponsive to their Latin [27-28]). Then, at a dinner party featuring all the most powerful members of the Institute, Merlin's attack begins with the confusion of languages. Wither's speech is exemplary. As he looks at the befuddled faces in the crowd, he cannot understand their confusion,

> for to him his own voice seemed to be uttering the speech he had resolved to make. But the audience heard him saying, "tidies and fugleman–I sheel foor that we all–er–most steeply rebut the defensible, though, I trust,

> lavatory, Aspasia which gleams to have selected our redeemed inspector this deceiving. It would–ah–be shark, very shark, from anyone's debenture . . . ." (346)

The dinner party erupts into mass confusion. Merlin has brought "the curse of Babel" upon the N. I. C. E. At one point he is heard to say in Latin, "They that have despised the word of God, from them shall the word of man also be taken away" (351). The danger that Aslan warned the animals against in *The Magician's Nephew* comes true at the end of *That Hideous Strength*. Those who have despised the truth have lost the primary tool for knowing it.

The problems that the individual faces in knowing reality, and, therefore, the problems one faces in making truth claims about reality, trace ultimately back to the primary dilemmas of knowing discussed at the end of chapter two. Truth is difficult to discern because we *are* subjective individuals, separated from reality by our faulty perceptions of it (frequently conditioned by false assumptions and presuppositions) that result in a constant need to apply corrective (but abstracting) reason to our distorted understanding. This conclusion calls for renewed study of the subject/object and abstract/concrete dilemmas.

## VI. Two Dilemmas Revisited

The analysis of the subject/object dilemma in the last chapter focused on the problems we face as subjective thinkers in knowing reality. Earlier in the chapter, however, a slightly different subject/object problem was considered. A variety of passages, including an important text from *The Abolition of Man* (81-86), have shown

Lewis's analysis of the process by which *any* objective reality has come to be denied. First Divinity (no more Dryads), then values (no more *Tao*), then physicality (the mathematics of quantum physics), and even human mind (only atoms moving in the brain) were denied objective reality by scientific abstraction and made into mere subjective perceptions caused by electro-chemical impulses in the brain. Lewis refuted this reductivism at its core: using reason to deny reason is a logical contradiction. The entire system crumbles. Paradoxically, as Lewis notes in "The Empty Universe," the mistake made by scientific materialists is the belief in their own complete objectivity; they believe they can know concrete facts completely. They fail to realize that their theories are interpretations, not facts, that they are subjective knowers whose conclusion that all knowledge is mere subjective experience is based on the contradictory system of belief that they have a completely objective grasp on the facts of nature (81-86).

The scientific materialist fails to see the difference between thinking and experiencing, the dichotomy established in "Myth Became Fact." As seen in "Transposition," the materialist has all the facts but none of the meaning (71), but "what are facts without interpretation?" (*Surprised by Joy* 121). Recall that when Lewis first grasped the distinction between thinking and experiencing, he finally understood that the Joy for which he had longed was something completely outside his subjective self, that Joy was itself the desiring of something that "quite clearly, was no state of my own mind or body at all" (*Surprised* 220). His longing, the desire he felt, was subjective, but that for which he longed was something "sheerly objective" (221). The recognition of the dilemma between thinking (which is abstract) and experiencing (which is concrete) led

Lewis to conclude that there was an utterly objective *other* which the subjective thinker struggles to know. In "Meditation in a Toolshed," Lewis describes thinking as "looking at" and experiencing as "looking along," and he claims that the mistake of the naturalist is to believe that abstract thinking, from a supposedly objective point of view ('looking at'), is superior to concrete experiencing ('looking along') and negates any knowledge one gains by experiencing a thing (212-15).

For Lewis what is always required is interpretation. One must experience reality and then must contemplate it in response. One must understand what it is and what it *means*. It is important to keep in mind, at this point, a danger raised in chapter two: the equating of spirit with mind and abstraction. The application here is to see that truth is not reality. It is abstract statements one makes about reality. Yet every so often Lewis hints at the possibility of concrete truths (see below). Nevertheless, the highest reality (God) is most concrete of all, more like the experiencing side than the thinking side of human knowing. But once we know the difference, we forever crave to be drawn out of our subjective self into an intimate relationship with the objectively real.

In chapter two, we saw that the separation of subject from object may be the root cause for the concrete/abstract (experiencing verses knowing) dichotomy. Because we (the thinking subject) are constantly separated from the objects of life about which we want to know, we are never able to both experience and think about them at the same time. Then we asked in what way are we separated from the objects we want to know, and it was suggested that such a state is a result of humanity's fallen condition. The missing conduit between subject and object is spirit. Only the senses connect us to the

external now. If we lived in a world like the heaven of *The Great Divorce*, spirit would fully connect all subjects to all objects.

To these supposals can be added connections gleaned from the current chapter, beginning with the suggestion that the primary conduit between subject and object is reason (and perhaps language) with other conduits including authority (the reasoning of others) and revelation. Whereas spirit connects subject and object in the heavenly realm, reason does so in a fallen world. This explains why the Queen of Perelandra encounters abstract reasoning for the first time only after Ransom exposes her to it. After a conversation about how the passage of time affects us, she says, "I have never done it before–stepping out of life into the alongside and looking at oneself living as if one were not alive" (*Perelandra* 60). But of course to reason is not to fall. The Queen has not had to rely on reason to know because she is connected by spirit to the source of all knowing (Maleldil frequently "speaks" to her in the same way he later speaks to Ransom–as a still small voice or presence [61]).

A second new connection regarding the subject/object issue involves seeing revelation as a conduit between knower and thing known. If spirit is a conduit for knowing in heavenly (or unfallen) realms, it will also be needed in a fallen world where reason is heavily relied on but limited to abstraction. When spirit breaks into the present world of human knowing, it does so as revelation.

Also important is looking briefly at the problem of truth and "meaning." In "Myth Became Fact" Lewis refers to the "abstract meaning" of a story (66). The passage appears to be equating meaning with truth. However, in "Bluspels and Flalansferes"

Lewis clearly states that truth (associated with reason) and meaning (associated with imagination) are not the same thing (157). So one must return to "Myth Became Fact" to look at Lewis's use of the term "meaning":

> I am trying to understand something very abstract indeed–the fading, vanishing of tasted reality as we try to grasp it with the discursive reason. Probably I have made heavy weather of it. But if I remind you, instead, of Orpheus and Eurydice, how he was suffered to lead her by the hand but, when he turned round to look at her, she disappeared, what was merely a principle becomes imaginable. You may reply that you never till this moment attached that 'meaning' to that myth. Of course not. You are not looking for an abstract 'meaning' at all. If that was what you were doing the myth would be for you no true myth but a mere allegory. You were not knowing, but tasting; but what you were tasting turns out to be a universal principle. The moment we *state* this principle, we are admittedly back in the world of abstraction. It is only while receiving the myth as a story that you experience the principle concretely. (66)

Some sense can be made of the term "meaning" here by beginning with the last sentence. When we receive myth as story, we are experiencing a principle concretely. Only when we put the experience into words does the principle become abstract. But if we can know a principle either concretely or by abstraction, perhaps meaning can be either concrete or abstract. This agrees with the statement in "Bluspels" that meaning is the necessary antecedent to both truth and falsehood (157). Further exploration of Lewis's concept of

meaning must await the remaining chapters where more information on Lewis's views of myth and imagination will add to an understanding of the meaning of "meaning."

Recall from chapter two that in *The Last Battle* heaven is described as looking like it "meant more," and it was suggested that, in heaven, spirit connects the subjective to the objective, the mind to the experience and even the thing being experienced, so that to experience is to know–to see the meaning all at once. The conclusion: when we leave the "valley of abstraction" for "the mountain of myth" ("Myth Became Fact" 66), abstraction utterly disappears. If this is indeed the case, the reader is compelled to say that truth utterly disappears as well (since truth is here defined as abstract statements about reality), not to be replaced by falsehood, of course, but by a reality so concrete as to be completely and fully known and experienced; here the dichotomy between object and subject disappears completely.

Does truth disappear in heaven? Lewis says, no. In *The Great Divorce*, truth does not disappear, it becomes concrete, something that can be tasted and embraced (in fact it is truth that does the embracing). Says one of the glorified beings to his intellectual friend, "hitherto you have experienced truth only with the abstract intellect. I will bring you where you can taste it like honey and be embraced by it as by a bridegroom" (43). Payne asserts that: "Ultimate Truth is a Person . . ." (62). From abstract concept, truth moves to embodied, living reality. This kind of personification (and by that term one need not necessarily mean a metaphorical conjoining of idea and personality–it is literal) may help reveal more about meaning and the subject/object dilemma. It is apparent not only in *Divorce* but in *Miracles* where God is ultimate Fact. Truth is personified; it is the

Person of God, and so is fact. In announcing His Godhood, Christ defined this epistemological quality of God: "I am the way, the truth, and the life . . ." (John 14.6); that is, He is completely self existent and self understood. And in Him subject and object are perfectly whole, one; just as His two natures–human and Divine–are in His one person. Two additional personifications expand our current understanding of truth, meaning, and knowing. The first of these is of reason:

> we must give up talking about 'human reason'. In so far as thought is merely human, merely a characteristic of one particular biological species, it does not explain our knowledge. Where thought is strictly rational it must be, in some odd sense, not ours, but cosmic or super-cosmic. It must be something not shut up inside our heads but already 'out there'–in the universe or behind the universe: either as objective as material Nature or more objective still. ("De Futilitate" 65)

Reason itself is as objective as nature, perhaps even more so. This is because it is a quality of the Nature of God after the same fashion as the *Tao*. When it was asked, "which came first, God or good?", the answer given in chapter two was "Yes." Lewis saw good, the *Tao*, as of the very essence of God. The same is true of truth and fact and reason.

The second instance of personification is in a passage in *That Hideous Strength* quoted earlier. Language is made alive in the "lord of Meaning himself [ . . . ] whom men call Mercury and Thoth" (322), but in an earlier passage, when Dimble is speaking Old Solar, the moment is described as the words themselves doing the speaking, or perhaps

not the words but the "god, the planets [the *Oyeresu*], and the Pendragon" or Ransom (229). The activity of transposition, of the higher taking the lower up into itself, explains this phenomenon. So, though Mercury is the *specific* personification, "Language herself" is borne out of her "at Maleldil's bidding" (229).

More important, though, is what happens to "fact" and "meaning" in the passage. The argument put forth has been that the description in *The Last Battle* of heaven as the place that *means* more indicates the coming together of subject and object, a greater intimacy and immediacy, that is, mediation done away in a realm of rich spirit, an eradication by spirit of the barrier that separates experience and thinking. Conversely, in this world of matter, reason is the mediating faculty between the knower and the real. Now the connection between reason and language must be considered. If Lewis's personifications have literal facthood in heaven then fact, truth, reason, meaning, and language commingle and coalesce in the Person of God. Truth as so far defined is a correspondence between statements someone makes about reality and reality itself. This definition is here much more significant because one can now see the importance of language ('statements') in the process. If reason is the bridge between fact and mind then language is the operant condition of reason. We make propositional statements (whether aloud or in our minds) about reality and reason about their correspondence with reality (their truth), using language to adjust, correct, or deny their validity. Language is clearly a tool of reason if not the very mode by which we reason. Thus language participates in connecting mind to reality. When the mind connects to a particular object of thought, meaning or signification is assigned. Even reasoning about basic facts, as noted earlier, is

interpreting what raw sensory data *means*. This is part of the significance of the *Hideous* passage. But there is an immediate problem. Language is not the same thing as meaning.

The definition of truth is correspondence between statements about reality and reality itself, and, again, truth and meaning are not the same thing. In the *Hideous* passage, language itself arrives and connects fact to mind so completely as to obliterate fact and leave nothing but meaning. By what has just been said, though, should not language connect mind to reality with the result of producing truth? Lewis should be interpreted thus: Language as we use it abstracts, like reason, but when language-as-spirit (spirit as perfect *mediator* eliminating any need for *mediation* between subject and object) affects us, we (the subject) are connected so perfectly to reality (the object) that abstract truth is transcended (no bridge of reasoned truth statements between mind and fact is needed), and fact becomes so completely known as not to be any external separable object (hence it is broken, turned inside out, and reborn) but the very known–meaning itself.

Through this interpretation one can come closer to a definition of meaning. Perhaps meaning can be either abstract or concrete, whereas truth can only be abstract here on earth. If this is so, then meaning has a closer kinship to experiencing (the concrete) and, as "Bluspels" says, is a precursor to thinking (the abstract); meaning, then, is also more akin to imagination ("the organ of meaning" ["Bluspels" 157]), which mimics the experiential. Perhaps meaning is simply what occurs in the mind when subject and object connect (see chapter six for a final definition). At this point one can at least say that, though the focus has been on language as abstraction (it abstracts reality into ideas), there may be a mode of language, permeated by spirit (above called language-

as-spirit), a "languaging" activity of spirit that connects subject to object without abstraction–and if true of language, then of the personification of reason as well. Lewis specifically says that reason takes on Personhood in heaven. Just before his conversion to Christianity, Lewis realized that "God was Reason itself" (*Surprised* 228).

Two problems remain with the passage from *That Hideous Strength* in which the angel of Mercury descends. Chapter two revealed that subject and object do not become one but that the Trinity is the mirror for knowing: as Three are One so do subject and object remain two yet become one. A few paragraphs back, though, it was suggested that fact becomes so completely known as not to be any external, separable object. Experientially, this seems the best description of what Lewis is saying in the *Hideous* passage where fact is broken down and "reborn as meaning" (322). Of course he is being poetic, writing story, and the job of the critic is to clarify his meaning in abstract statements. It is better said this way (and the passage bears this reading): fact does not merge with mind so as to disappear; rather, fact becomes so intimately connected to mind that, though it remains, it is converted into meaning (see chapter six).

VII. Possible Answers to the Triple Engima

With two sides of the triple enigma discussed, some comparing is now possible; that is, the reader can begin to read the map to Lewis's epistemology. A few cursory points are worth making. On earth, because of fallenness or because matter is distinct from spirit, or both, truth is different from fact. Fact is the concretely real; truth is abstract statements that correspond to fact. What truth shares with fact, though, is correspondence. As all facts are real, so all truths are *real* in so far as they correspond to

reality. In contrast, falsehood consists of statements that do not correspond to reality. Falsehoods are real, but they are only real falsehoods, nothing else. The hope that the distinction between truth and fact can fade lies in the concept of multiple levels of reality. If we live in the "valley of abstraction" now, we can hope one day to enter a realm of being so concrete that truth there becomes an experience of the Ultimate Fact rather than an abstraction about it. In that realm, not only are quantities "concrete" (to use Lewis's chief metaphor of heaven) but even qualitative concepts like the *Tao*, and reason, and beauty, and language, exist in form that is best described, again, using metaphors of solidity.

The third side to the triangle yet remains: myth.

Notes

[1] Lewis credits a book by J. B. S. Haldane, entitled *Possible Worlds*, for this argument.

[2] For a more thorough summary of Lewis's view on faith and reason see Burson and Walls 159-60.

[3] "'Not I, but the Lord' (v. 10); 'I speak, not the Lord' (v. 12)" (Editor's note).

[4] Burson and Walls draw similar conclusions about levels of revelation and their summary of the issue is worthy of review (see 125-26). They conclude: "Revelation comes to people in varying degrees of opacity, condensing and focusing over time until the clearest, fullest presentation of divine revelation breaks forth in the Incarnation" (126).

## Chapter Four

## Myth

This chapter considers, both chronologically and topically, Lewis's views on "myth." After covering some basic issues, we will consider: Lewis's concept of "mythopoeic" literature; "imagination" and its relation to myth; whether Lewis's post-conversion view of myth evolved; the dilemmas of knowing in relation to myth; and a first analysis of the relationship among all three terms of the triple enigma.

### I. Introductory Issues

The reader has already learned something of Lewis's view of myth. Myth is a vehicle for Divine revelation. It is "a real *though unfocused gleam* of divine truth . . ." (*Miracles* 176*n*., emphasis added). God speaks to humanity through pagan religions, revealing partial glimpses of truth (*Reflections* 74, 90-92). The vehicle of myth is imagination (*Miracles* 176*n*.); therefore, myth is embodied in story. Myth is not (at least at first) history, but God's progressive revelation of Himself in the Bible moves from being mostly mythological to partially myth, and, finally, to history (*Miracles* 176*n*.). And in Christ, myth becomes fact ("Myth Became Fact" 66-67).

A fuller understanding of myth will come from looking at its chronological development in Lewis's thinking primarily up to his conversion (with the possibility of further developmental changes reserved for later consideration). Two recurring issues arise. First, Lewis makes connections between myth and Joy by way of imagination. Second, the possible origins of myth are explored.

The role that myth played in Lewis's conversion cannot be overstated. It was

central because myth was central to his life. Lewis said, "I am a product of long corridors, empty sunlit rooms, upstairs indoor silences, attics explored in solitude, distant noises of gurgling cisterns and pipes, and the noise of wind under the tiles. Also, of endless books" (*Surprised* 10). Between the ages of six and eight, "I was living almost entirely in my imagination" (15). Lewis's concept of Joy was in chapter two. One of his earliest experiences of Joy was in his first exposure to Norse mythology (17). Later in life Lewis explained that his earliest experiences of *Sehnsucht* were "a wholly good element. Without them my conversion would have been more difficult" ("Christianity and Culture" 23). Lewis describes *Sehnsucht* as "spilled religion," drops of blessing which the unconverted man may drink up and then hopefully pursue the cup from which they were spilled (23*n*.). This idea correlates with the idea of myth as partial revelation from God. A central tenet of Lewis's epistemology is that, at least for him, exposure to myth leads to the experience of Joy, and the experience of Joy-as-longing may lead to the perfect satisfaction of that longing in knowing the One who has been 'spilling' those drops from the beginning. Here, then, is also a confirmation of myth's origin and purpose. It comes from God to draw humanity to Himself.

Kuteeva succinctly summarizes the place of myth in Lewis's life in his early teen years:

> New glimpses of Joy came around 1911 (at age 13), after a long period of inert imagination which followed Lewis's early childhood. What Lewis later called "personal Renaissance" or "Northernness" was directly connected with his reading. Fascinated by Arthur Rackham's illustrations

> to *Siegfried and the Twilight of the Gods* and Wagner's music, he started his acquaintance of Guerber's *Myths of the Norsemen*, Mackenzie's *Teutonic Myth and Legends*, and Mallet's *Northern Antiquities*, which included an appendix containing most of *The Prose Edda*. The impression made upon him by Norse mythology was so deep that it led Lewis to confess that "[my] imaginative life began to be so important and so distinct from my outer life that I almost have to tell two separate stories" (*Surprised* 78).
>
> Northernness stimulated Lewis's interest in other mythologies. He found classical mythology, as retold by Ovid, Virgil, and Euripides, to be different from Norse [ . . . . ] As a result of the interest in both mythologies, in 1914 Lewis even attempted to write his own tragedy entitled "Loki Bound," "Norse in subject and Greek in form" (113[1]). (Kuteeva 266)

Then followed Lewis's stay with William Kirkpatrick (1914-17) from whom he obtained his first real education and to whom must be credited a dual impact on Lewis's view of myth (Hooper *C. S. Lewis* 597). Kirkpatrick exposed Lewis to numerous mythical works including "Milton, Spenser, Malory, *The High History of the Holy Grail, Beowulf* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Apuleius, the *Kalevala*, Sir John Mandeville, Sidney's *Arcadia*, and nearly all of William Morris" (Kuteeva 267). However, though Lewis had given up his faith before coming to Kirkpatrick, the old atheist's tutelage fostered Lewis's bifurcation into myth-loving romantic and

demythologizing rationalist. Hooper points out that Frazer's highly influential anthropological myth study, *The Golden Bough*, was published during this time (Hooper *C. S. Lewis* 597). According to Kuteeva, Lewis's view of myth was influenced heavily by Frazer along with Kirkpatrick and Andrew Lang's *Myth, Ritual and Religion* (267). Contemporaneous letters to Arthur Greeves illustrate these influences.

In one such letter, Lewis refers to "the primitive savage idea that everything has a spirit (just as your precious Jehovah is an old Hebrew thunder spirit)" (*Letters to Greeves* 4 July 1916, 118). In another letter the young Lewis writes,

> As to the other question about religion, I was sad to read your letter. You ask me my religious views: you know, I think, that I believe in no religion. There is absolutely no proof for any of them, and from a philosophical standpoint Christianity is not even the best. All religions, that is, all mythologies to give them their proper name are merely man's own invention–Christ as much as Loki. Primitive man found himself surrounded by all sorts of terrible things he didn't understand–thunder, pestilence, snakes etc: what is more natural than to suppose that these were animated by evil spirits trying to torture him. These he kept off by cringing to them, singing songs and making sacrifices etc. Gradually from being mere nature-spirits these supposed being[s] were elevated into more elaborate ideas, such as the old gods: and when man became more refined he pretended that these spirits were good as well as powerful. [ . . .]
>
> Now all this you must have heard before: it is the recognised

> scientific account of the growth of religions. (*Greeves* 12 October 1916, 135)

Lewis led a bifurcated state of mind for years to come. He describes his younger self in terms of split halves. On the one side resided the imaginative life of myth and Joy, and on the other side "the life of my intellect. The two hemispheres of my mind were in the sharpest contrast. On the one side a many-islanded sea of poetry and myth; on the other a glib and shallow 'rationalism.' Nearly all that I loved I believed to be imaginary; nearly all that I believed to be real I thought grim and meaningless" (*Surprised* 170). In March of 1916, however, Lewis read a book by George MacDonald that allowed his imaginative longings to pursue a right direction–one which would ultimately lead him to Christ (Ford 260). In his preface to *George MacDonald: An Anthology*, Lewis recalls how he bought MacDonald's *Phantastes* and, upon reading it, how it saved him from a dark imaginative path. As he completed the book, Lewis realized that he

> had crossed a great frontier. I had already been waist-deep in Romanticism; and likely enough, at any moment, to flounder into its darker and more evil forms, slithering down the steep descent that leads from the love of strangeness to that of eccentricity and thence to that of perversity. Now *Phantastes* was romantic enough in all conscience; but there was a difference. Nothing was at that time further from my thoughts than Christianity and I therefore had no notion what this difference really was. I was only aware that if this new world was strange, it was also homely and humble; that if this was a dream, it was a dream in which

> one at least felt strangely vigilant; that the whole book had about it a sort of cool, morning innocence, and also, quite unmistakably, a certain quality of Death, *good* Death. What it actually did to me was to convert, even to baptize (that was where the Death came in) my imagination. It did nothing to my intellect nor (at that time) to my conscience. Their turn came far later and with the help of many other books and men. [ . . . ] The quality which enchanted me in his imaginative works turned out to be the quality of the real universe, the divine, magical, terrifying, and ecstatic reality in which we all live. (*George MacDonald* 34-35)

*Phantastes* was Lewis's first experience (though he did not know it) of a reality that could appeal to both his reason and imagination. The reader shall shortly see that it was just such a conjoining of the two Lewis halves that allowed him to finally accept Christianity as true.

After completing "Greats" in 1922, Lewis stayed on in Oxford to study in the "English School." There he befriended Nevill Coghill, who notes that Lewis continued in his bifurcated state of thinking into his twenties: "His tastes were essentially for what had magnitude and suggestion of myth: the heroic and romantic never failed to excite his imagination, and although at this time he was something of a professed atheist, the mystically supernatural things in ancient epic and saga always attracted him . . ." (Green and Hooper 74).

Nevertheless, Lewis had changed. As mentioned in chapter two, his naturalism gave way to idealism, especially after the war. His further study of literature, however,

drew him to Christianity. The best writers were Christian, and the "only non-Christians who seemed to me really to know anything were the Romantics; and a good many of them were dangerously tinged with something like religion, even at times with Christianity" (*Surprised* 214). Lewis recalls concluding for the moment "that 'the Christian myth' conveyed to unphilosophic minds as much of the truth, that is of Absolute Idealism, as they were capable of grasping . . ." (215).

Assault on the bifurcated Lewis occurred on a different front in the form of another new friendship, one with Owen Barfield. In the early twenties, Barfield and Lewis participated in a rigorous though friendly intellectual exchange that Lewis called their "Great War" (207). Some of the effects the exchange had on Lewis's epistemology will be considered in chapter five. But one effect is immediately pertinent. Lewis said Barfield cured him of his "'chronological snobbery,' the uncritical acceptance of the intellectual climate common to our own age and the assumption that whatever has gone out of date is on that account discredited" (207). This allowed Lewis to reconsider his attitudes toward medieval thinking and literature and toward Christianity (Kuteeva 268). And Barfield also affected Lewis's view of myth, as Kuteeva brilliantly summarizes:

> Barfield's ideas also became crucial for the change of Lewis's understanding of myth. In his first two published works, *History in English Words* (1926) and *Poetic Diction* (1928), Barfield argues that myth has a central place in the study of language and literature. Examining the history of words, he concludes that myth is closely associated with language and its origins. In brief, Barfield's theory can be

> presented as follows. Once myth, language, and human perception of the world were inseparable. Thus one can trace the plurality of meanings of a word back to the stage when the word had all its present meanings in one. All diction was literal, and there was no distinction between concrete and abstract meanings. Humans perceived the cosmos as a whole, and themselves as part of it. In our age, on the contrary, humanity distinguishes itself from the rest of nature, and words and myths are looked at from the point of view of abstraction. (268)

This passage bears directly on the triple enigma and Lewis's epistemology as a whole; Barfield's theories on language and myth figure prominently throughout the current chapter. Its immediate implication, though, is a connection to Lewis's conversion. Barfield moved Lewis toward a "more respectful, if not more delighted, attitude to Pagan myth" (*Surprised* 235). For Lewis, myth became a topic of intellectual contemplation, not just personal delight. His bifurcated mindset began to break down. A letter to Barfield, though light-hearted, nevertheless suggests this new intellectual interest in myth:

> By the bye, we now need a new word for the "science of the nature of myths" since "mythology" has been appropriated to the myths themselves. Would "mythonomy" do? I am quite serious. If your views are not a complete error this subject will become more important and it's worth while trying to get a good word before they invent a beastly one. "Mytho-logic" (noun) wouldn't be bad, but people wd read it as an adjective. I have also thought of "mythopoeics", (cf. "Metaphysics") but that leads to

> "a mythopoeician" wh. is frightful: whereas "a mythonomer" [ . . . ] is nice. (*Letters* 7 June 1928, 255)

Lewis's conversion came as a direct result of a changed view of the nature of myth. Barfield's theories on language and myth paved the way for the change, but the catalysts for the conversion were two other Oxford friends. When Lewis found a teaching position at Magdalen college, he met these two Christian men, Hugo Dyson and J. R. R. Tolkien. Lewis's conversion was effected by a late-night conversation he had with Dyson and Tolkien. Tolkien's "On Fairy-Stories" shares many ideas with Barfield and, by influence, with Lewis's views on myth. Tolkien associates fairy-story with myth in the essay (48, 51, and 74), and like Lewis, Tolkien sees a revelatory quality in myth: "Something really 'higher' is occassionally glimpsed in mythology: Divinity . . ." (51). Tolkien, says Kuteeva, adopted Barfield's understanding of the relationship between myth and language (268). He denied Max Muller's view of mythology as a "disease of language," saying the opposite is more near the truth: "languages, especially modern European languages, are a disease of mythology" (Tolkien 48).

On September 19, 1931, Lewis invited Dyson and Tolkien to dinner. The conversation lasted till 3:00 a.m. with Tolkien and another hour between Lewis and Dyson. As Green and Hooper put it, it was a conversation by which Lewis "was finally to see how his beliefs about myth, paganism, and Christianity cohere" (116). Humphrey Carpenter's explanation of the conversation (from Tolkien's perspective) emphasizes the influence of Barfield's and Tolkien's view of myth and language:

> Lewis, though now a believer in God, could not yet understand the

function of Christ in Christianity, could not perceive the meaning of the Crucifixion and Resurrection. He declared that he had to understand the purpose of these

events [ . . . . ]

As the night wore on, Tolkien and Dyson showed him that he was here making a totally unnecessary demand. When he encountered the idea of sacrifice in the mythology of a pagan religion he admired it and was moved by it; indeed the idea of the dying and reviving deity had always touched his imagination since he had read the story of the Norse god Balder. But from the Gospels (they said) he was requiring something more, a clear meaning beyond the myth. Could he not transfer his comparatively unquestioning appreciation of sacrifice from the myth to the true story?

*But*, said Lewis, *myths are lies, even though lies breathed through silver.*[2]

*No*, said Tolkien, *they are not.*

And, indicating the great trees of Magdalen Grove as their branches bent in the wind, he struck out a different line of argument. You call a tree a tree, he said, and you think nothing more of the word. But it was not a 'tree' until someone gave it that name. You call a star a star, and say it is just a ball of matter moving on a mathematical course. But that is merely how *you* see it. By so naming things and describing

> them you are only inventing your own terms about them. And just as speech is invention about objects and ideas, so myth is invention about truth. (Carpenter 146-47)

Lewis's own explanation of the event does not contradict the above account, but shifts the emphasis to the relationship between myth and fact, emphasizing Christianity and its mythic qualities. When Lewis could finally see Christianity as being myth as well as fact–that is, when the bifurcated Lewis's own demand for mythic wonder on the one side and rational reality on the other finally met in Christianity–he was able to believe (see *Surprised* 235-36). Just two weeks before his conversion Lewis wrote to Arthur Greeves: "I must confess that more and more the value of plays and novels becomes for me dependent on the moments when, by whatever artifice, they succeed in expressing the great *myths*" (*Greeves* 5 September 1931, 420). His love for myth only increased. In a letter of 22 September, Lewis mentions the conversation with Tolkien and Dyson, saying, "We began [ . . . ] on metaphor and myth" (*Greeves* 421). Then, in a letter of 1 October, Lewis tells Greeves, "I have just passed on from believing in God to definitely believing in Christ" (*Greeves* 425), and he credits the conversation with Dyson and Tolkien. Lewis explains the conversation in detail in his next letter to Greeves:

> What has been holding me back (at any rate for the last year or so) has not been so much a difficulty in believing as a difficulty in knowing what the doctrine *meant*: you can't believe a thing while you are ignorant *what* the thing is. My puzzle was the whole doctrine of Redemption: in what sense the life and death of Christ 'saved' or 'opened salvation to' the

world. [ . . . ] What I couldn't see was how the life and death of Someone Else (whoever he was) 2000 years ago could help us here and now–except in so far as his *example* helped us. [ . . . ]

Now what Dyson and Tolkien showed me was this: that if I met the idea of sacrifice in a Pagan story I didn't mind it at all: again, that if I met the idea of a god sacrificing himself to himself [ . . . ] I liked it very much and was mysteriously moved by it: again, that the idea of the dying and reviving god (Balder, Adonis, Bacchus) similarly moved me provided I met it anywhere *except* in the Gospels. The reason was that in Pagan stories I was prepared to feel the myth as profound and suggestive of meanings beyond my grasp even tho' I could not say in cold prose 'what it meant'.

Now the story of Christ is simply a true myth: a myth working on us in the same way as the others, but with this tremendous difference that *it really happened*: and one must be content to accept it in the same way, remembering that it is God's myth where the others are men's myths: i.e. the Pagan stories are God expressing Himself through the minds of poets, using such images as He found there while Christianity is God expressing Himself through what we call 'real things'. Therefore it is *true*, not in the sense of being a 'description' of God (that no finite mind could take in) but in the sense of being the way in which God chooses to (or can) appear to our faculties. The 'doctrines' we get *out of* the true myth are of course

> *less* true; already expressed in a language more adequate, namely the actual incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection. (*Greeves* 18 October 1931, 426-28)

Kuteeva concludes that the "anthropological beliefs of his [Lewis's] adolescence were totally transformed into the belief in the truth of the Christian story and partial truth of the greater ancient myths" (269-70).

It remains to consider the origins of myth and Lewis's definitions of it. These issues are taken together because to answer one often involves answering the other. To begin with, Lewis argues that myth is a revelation of God to man. In the Greeves letter Lewis says, "the Pagan stories are God expressing Himself through the minds of poets using such images as He found there, while Christianity is God expressing Himself through what we call 'real things'" (18 October 1931, 427). Three months later Lewis wrote that the sacrificial gods of all the "greater myths" (including Balder, Dionysus, Adonis, and the Grail) were "the first shadowy approach of something whose reality came with Christ" (*Greeves* 10 January 1932, 437).

Perhaps these "shadowy" myths originate archetypally, which for Lewis (though not for Jung) would be to say God placed them in the subconscious of each human being from birth. Lewis was intrigued by Carl Jung's archetypal theory: "For Jung, fairy tale liberates Archetypes which dwell in the collective unconscious, and when we read a good fairy tale we are obeying the old precept 'know thyself'" ("On Three Ways of Writing for Children" 27). Lewis did not absolutely embrace Jung, however: "Jung's theory of myth is as exciting as a good myth and in the same way. [. . .] But I have an idea that the true

analysis of a thing ought not to be so like the thing itself. I should not expect a true theory of the comic to be itself funny" ("De Audiendis Poetis" 16-17). Lewis treats Jung at length in his essay "Psycho-Analysis and Literary Criticism." He concludes that the origin of primordial images is more remote than Jung theorizes (300), but that, if Jung's theory "turns out to be bad science it is excellent poetry" (297).

Nevertheless, Lewis does agree that there is a subconscious quality to myth. In *Mere Christianity* he calls myth "good dreams" sent to the human race by God: "I mean those queer stories scattered all through the heathen religions about a god who dies and comes to life again and, by his death, has somehow given new life to men" (44). Also, in comparing myth to allegory, Lewis says, "Into an allegory a man can put only what he already knows: in a myth he puts what he does not yet know and cd not come to know in any other way" (*Letters* 22 September 1956, 458).

If one is uncomfortable with a metaphor from psychology, the metaphor of distance may be more acceptable. Near the end of *Perelandra* Ransom asks the *Oyeresu* of Venus and Mars how they came to be known on Earth.

> It comes, they told him, a long way round and through many stages. There is an environment of minds as well as of space. The universe is one–a spider's web wherein each mind lives along every line, a vast whispering gallery where (save for the direct action of Maleldil) though no news travels unchanged yet no secret can be rigorously kept. In the mind of the fallen Archon under whom our planet groans, the memory of Deep Heaven and the gods with whom he once consorted is still alive.

> Nay, in the very matter of our world, the traces of the celestial commonwealth are not quite lost. Memory passes through the womb and hovers in the air. The Muse is a real thing. A faint breath, as Virgil says, reaches even the late generations. Our mythology is based on a solider reality than we dream: but it is also at an almost infinite distance from that base. And when they told him this, Ransom at last understood why mythology was what it was–gleams of celestial strength and beauty falling on a jungle of filth and imbecility. (201)

The significances of this passage are several. The "environment of minds" touches on the issue of intimate subject/object connection in higher levels of reality. That memory "passes through the womb and hovers in the air" is suggestive of archetypal or *a priori* knowledge of the mythic beyond. The idea that "in the very matter of our world traces of the celestial commonwealth are not quite lost" resonates with a myth passage on death, resurrection, and atonement in *The Problem of Pain,* wherein Lewis says that "Nature herself has written it large across the world in the repeated drama of the buried seed and the re-arising corn. From nature, perhaps, the oldest agriculture communities learned it and with animal, or human, sacrifices showed forth for centuries the truth that 'without shedding of blood is no remission'" (103). And these latter points, the possibility of archetypal knowing, the message of myth in nature itself, along with the reference in the *Perelandra* passage to the "Muse" whose "faint breath" reaches even to today, these possibilities suggest the mythic quality of the "numinous" which excites otherwise unexplainable "awe" in human experience (*Problem* 17-20).

Then there is the reference to the "whispering gallery" and the "almost infinite distance" from the solid reality on which our mythology is based. The metaphor of distance is applicable to all of the above instances for all have in common the quality of faint communication. What comes from beyond as myth is faint because of the great distance, whether between heaven and earth, the cosmos and a fallen world, infinite mind and weak human comprehension, perfection and fall, or ultimate object and singular subject. So in *Perelandra* myth is defined as "gleams of celestial strength and beauty falling on a jungle of filth and imbecility" (201). It is a close parallel to the definition in *Miracles*: "a real though unfocused gleam of divine truth falling on human imagination" (176*n*.). Kuteeva's wording (borrowed from Tolkien) summarizes the distance metaphor aptly. Myth comes as "splinters of truth" (Kuteeva 272).

Worth brief mention here is another source of myth which will be taken up more thoroughly in the next sub-section. From Tolkien Lewis learned the concept of man as "sub-creator." One of man's "proper functions" as image bearers of the creator is to delight in making "a subordinate world of his own" ("On Three Ways" 27). In other words, myth arises out of the human need to create mythic worlds in story.

Lewis only came close to systematizing a theory of myth in a few passages. The study of mythology (as "mythonomy" or whatever name they could invent) which he suggested to Barfield in 1928 never became anything like a discipline for Lewis. Following Barfield's lead, Lewis rejected any naturalistic theories of myth (Schakel *Reason and Imagination* 73). Even Jung's theory of a collective unconscious did not explain myth's origins sufficiently for Lewis. As Kuteeva sees it, Lewis was reluctant to

consider "any scientific or rational analysis in striving to explain the phenomenon of myth and its power" (274).

This said, Lewis nevertheless deals with myth's origins, definitions, and function in several significant passages, most of which are only a few pages long. "Myth Became Fact" and the *Miracles* chapter 15 footnote balance concern for fact and truth as well as myth; these passages will be reviewed, once again, later in the chapter. One of the shorter texts is in Lewis's introduction to *George MacDonald: An Anthology*, and will be discussed in the next sub-section. Two others parallel each other. One is in *Reflections on the Psalms* (89-90), and the other is in "Religion Without Dogma," quoted here as representative of the two:

> A great many different views on it have, of course, been held. Myths have been accepted as literally true, then as allegorically true (by the Stoics), as confused history (by Euhemerus), as priestly lies (by the philosophers of the enlightenment), as imitative agricultural ritual mistaken for propositions (in the days of Frazer). If you start from a naturalistic philosophy, then something like the view of Euhemerus or the view of Frazer is likely to result. But I am not a naturalist. I believe that in the huge mass of mythology which has come down to us a good many different sources are mixed–true history, allegory, ritual, the human delight in story telling, etc. But among these sources I include the supernatural, both diabolical and divine. We need here concern ourselves only with the latter. If my religion is erroneous then occurrences of similar motifs in

> pagan stories are, of course, instances of the same, or a similar error. But if my religion is true, then these stories my well be a *preparatio evangelica*, a divine hinting in poetic and ritual form at the same central truth which was later focused and (so to speak) historicised in the Incarnation. [ . . . ] I could not believe Christianity if I were forced to say that there were a thousand religions in the world of which 999 were pure nonsense and the thousandth (fortunately) true. My conversion, very largely, depended on recognizing Christianity as the completion, the actualization, the entelechy, of something that had never been wholly absent from the mind of man. (131-32)

Here Lewis attributes myth to a variety of sources: history, allegory, ritual, story telling, and supernatural sources both divine and diabolical. Lewis also relates what he believes to be God's major purpose for myth in the world (seen previously in the Greeves letter of 10 January 1932 [*Greeves* 437]; *Problem* 103 and 25; and *Mere* 44). God has sent myth–"splinters of truth"–into the world as a revelation. Specifically, divine myth serves as a *preparatio evangelica*, a means of preparing humanity for the coming of the gospel, the myth that became fact.

*An Experiment in Criticism* is the one book that devotes a chapter to the concept of myth; however, Lewis is clear in stating he has no intention of "accounting for myths" (44); rather, he only wants to describe them. Myth is a story containing the following charactertics:

> 1. It is [ . . . ] extra-literary. Those who have got at the same myth

through Natalis Comes, Lempriere, Kingsley, Hawthorne, Robert Graves, or Roger Green, have a mythical experience in common [ . . . ].[3]

2. The pleasure of myth depends hardly at all on such usual narrative attractions as suspense or surprise. Even at a first hearing it is felt to be inevitable. And the first hearing is chiefly valuable in introducing us to a permanent object of contemplation–more like a thing than a narration–which works upon us by its peculiar flavour or quality, rather as a smell or a chord does. Sometimes, even from the first, there is hardly any narrative element. The idea that the gods, and all good men, live under the shadow of Ragnarok is hardly a story. The Hesperides, with the apple-tree and dragon, are already a potent myth, without bringing in Herakles to steal the apples.

3. Human sympathy is at a minimum. We do not project ourselves at all strongly into the characters. They are like shapes moving in another world. We feel indeed that the pattern of their movements has a profound relevance to our own life, but we do not imaginatively transport ourselves into theirs. The story of Orpheus makes us sad; but we are sorry for all men rather than vividly sympathetic with him, as we are, say, with Chaucer's Troilus.

4. Myth is always, in one sense of that word, 'fantastic'. It deals with impossibles and preter-naturals.

5. The experience may be sad or joyful but it is always grave.

> Comic myth (in my sense of *myth*) is impossible.
>
> 6. The experience is not only grave but awe-inspiring. We feel it to be numinous. It is as if something of great moment had been communicated to us. The recurrent efforts of the mind to grasp–we mean, chiefly, to conceptualise–this something, are seen in the persistent tendency of humanity to provide myths with allegorical explanations. And after all allegories have been tried, the myth itself continues to feel more important than they. (43-44)

Points four and six above are familiar. The others are new to this study. This is because Lewis chose to write about myth in a very narrow vein in *Experiment*. After the list, he says he is not interested in the origins of myth, or how a myth affects the minds of those who believe in it. His only concern in *Experiment* is with our contemporary experience of myth. Specifically, he is interested in "ways of reading" (45-46) and so defines myths "by their effect on us" (45).

Briefly, then, in a more literary vein, myth is story but not any particular author's wording of a story; however, the pleasure of myth is not to be found in the myth as a story (a narrative) but in its essence–it is "more like a thing than a narration" (43). This recalls "Myth Became Fact" where Lewis says what one experiences in myth is not abstract truth or particular history but a taste of an object far more concrete (66). Thus, in Lewis's third description, characters are not fully developed individuals but shadows of human existence to which one universally relates. Finally, myth is fantastic, grave, and awe-inspiring or "numinous."

The first and sixth descriptors recall an earlier discussion on the relationship between myth and language. This topic will be carried over into the next sub-section. Lewis's concerns about myth and story, literature and language, which this section has touched on fall under the umbrella of his theory of "mythopoesis."

II. Mythopoesis

Northrop Frye's singular compliment to C. S. Lewis was to list him in a group of writers about whom he says, "many learned and recondite writers whose work requires patient study are explicitly mythopoeic writers" (117). According to Jared C. Lobdell, "Lewis himself is partly responsible for the currency of the word *mythopoeia* . . ." (68). Much of Lewis's mythopoeic theory, and therefore his theory of myth in general, owes its origins to Barfield and Tolkien.

A hint at the definition of mythopoesis is offered in Lewis's review of *The Hobbit*. He says that Tolkien's first book of Middle-earth belongs "to a very small class of books which have nothing in common save that each admits us to a world of its own–a world that seems to have been going on before we stumbled into it . . ." ("The Hobbit" 81). In "On Science-Fiction," Lewis identifies a type of science fiction which he calls mythopoeic. What characterizes this type is the setting of "strange worlds" which need not have "scientific probabilities. It is their wonder, or beauty, or suggestiveness that matters" (64). In the same essay Lewis labels "fantasies and fairy tales" as mythopoeic (67). Lewis is more specific in his review of *The Fellowship of the Ring*. The "author's huge myth" at moments achieves "the utmost reach of invention, when an author produces what seems to be not even his own, much less anyone else's" ("Tolkien's *The*

*Lord of the Rings*" 84, 86). Lewis says Tolkien's world is far from the "subjective"; his cosmos is a world unto itself. This kind of writing is "mythopoeia." Its primary quality is what Tolkien calls "sub-creation" (84), and Lewis says *The Fellowship* is the most thorough example of sub-creation in literature (83). Lewis claims that Tolkien's book possesses the quality of "world making" that defines mythopoesis and sub-creation:

> The direct debt [ . . . ] which every author must owe to the actual universe is here deliberately reduced to the minimum. Not content to create his own story, he creates, with an almost insolent prodigality, the whole world in which it is to move, with its own theology, myths, geography, history, palaeography, languages, and orders of beings . . . (84)

Lewis similarly defines sub-creation in "On Three Ways of Writing for Children." Sub-creation is a human function intended not to make "a comment upon life" but to allow an author to make a "subordinate world of his own" (27). Tolkien's own explication of sub-creation is laid out in his lengthy essay, "On Fairy-Stories." His first use of the term appears in the context of the human impulse to create Faerie stories:

> When we can take green from grass, blue from heaven, and red from blood, we have already an enchanter's power–upon one plane; and the desire to wield that power in the world external to our minds awakes. It does not follow that we shall use that power well upon any plane. We may put a deadly green upon a man's face and produce a horror; we may make the rare and terrible blue moon to shine; or we may cause woods to spring with silver leaves and rams to wear fleeces of gold, and put hot fire into the belly of the cold worm. But in such

> "fantasy," as it is called, new form is made; Faerie begins; Man becomes a sub-creator. [ . . . ] This aspect of "mythology"–subcreation, rather than either representation or symbolic interpretation of the beauties and terrors of the world–is, I think, too little considered. (48-49)

Tolkien relates sub-creation to myth. He further distinguishes it from other artistic endeavors: 'representation' and 'symbolic interpretation,' and he indicates that sub-creation involves the making of a 'new form.' Later in the essay Tolkien says that the story-maker who is capable of creating *literary belief* in a reader proves himself "a successful 'sub-creator.' He makes a Secondary World which your mind can enter. Inside it, what he relates is 'true': it accords with the laws of that world" (60). This sub-created world will have an "inner consistency of reality" which inspires "Secondary Belief" (68); that is, the sub-created world will be one which the reader can imaginatively enter and accept as a reality unto itself while he is inside that world.

To say that sub-creation and mythopoesis are absolute synonyms is probably a mistake. There are differences in emphasis. One emphasis that Lewis makes that is present but not a primary point in Tolkien's sub-creation is the tentative relationship between mythopoeia and language. In *An Experiment in Criticism* Lewis says the value of myth is "independent of its embodiment in any literary work" (41). The story of Orpheus would still be powerful whether told with the poetic voice of Virgil or not.

Lewis makes this argument at length in his introduction to *George MacDonald: An Anthology*. Intending to balance MacDonald's literary defects over against his mythopoeic prowess, Lewis looks at myth and language:

We all agree that the story of Balder is a great myth, a thing of inexhaustible value. But of whose version–whose *words*–are we thinking when we say this?

For my own part, the answer is that I am not thinking of anyone's words. No poet, as far as I know or can remember, has told this story supremely well. I am not thinking of any particular version of it. If the story is anywhere embodied in words, that is almost an accident. What really delights and nourishes me is a particular pattern of events, which would equally delight and nourish if it had reached me by some medium which involved no words at all–say by a mime, or a film. [ . . . ] In this respect stories of the mythical type are at the opposite pole from lyrical poetry. If you try to take the "theme" of Keats's *Nightingale* apart from the very words in which he has embodied it, you find that you are talking about almost nothing. Form and content can there be separated only by a false abstraction. But in a myth–in a story where the mere pattern of events is all that matters–this is not so. Any means of communication whatever which succeeds in lodging those events in our imagination has, as we say, "done the trick". After that you can throw the means of communication away. [ . . . ] In poetry the words are the body, and the "theme" or "content" is the soul. But in myth the imagined events are the body and something inexpressible is the soul: the words, or mime, or film, or pictorial series are not even clothes–they are not much more than a

telephone. (26-28)

Lewis suggests that *any* form of communication, even mime or film, might deliver the mythic story. Even in a myth that is received through language, the specific language will likely disappear from memory; what will remain are the images and events of the story. In this text Lewis calls myth a "particular pattern of events" (27). Perhaps as a pattern, though, myth is a kind or mode of "languaging" itself, a language not of words but of images. Lewis's contrasting of myth and allegory offers insight into this possibility.

In the sixth descriptor in Lewis's list from *An Experiment in Criticism*, he says myth communicates the numinous, a sense of something great which the mind struggles to grasp conceptually (44). This conceptual struggle results in the "persistent tendency of humanity to provide myths with allegorical explanations"(44); however, the myth will continue to mean more. Lewis understood a difference between myth and allegory very early in his thinking. A discussion on the composition of *Dymer* yields a determination by the young poet "to keep the MYTH true and intrude as little invention of conscious allegory as might be" (*All My Roads* 16 May 1922, 35). The word "conscious" here is key. Lewis describes the major difference between myth and allegory as having to do with conscious intention and multiplicity of meanings. Later in life he says,

> *My* view wd be that a good myth (i.e. a story out of which ever varying meanings will grow for different readers and in different ages) is a higher thing than an allegory (into which *one* meaning has been put). Into an allegory a man can put only what he already knows: in a myth he puts what he does not yet know and cd not come to know in any other way.

(*Letters* 22 September 1956, 458)

Allegory is conscious and its meanings are specific. In allegory correlation between sign and signified is consciously, deliberately applied; the sign has only one meaning and that is predetermined by the author. In myth, on the other hand, meanings are multiple, fluid, and greater than the author's conscious intent. The difference between allegory and myth can be formulated as follows: whereas allegory *contains* meaning, myth simply *means*. This idea echoes a discussion that took place in chapter two about Lewis's view of the difference between allegory and symbol/sacrament. A passage in "Transposition" said that, in sacramentalism, the sign is a medium which bears that which it signifies. The object *is* what it means; it is simultaneously the signifier and the signified. Myth, then, as an object which *is* what it *means*, is a sacramental kind of communication, what can be called (as one function of spirit was labeled in chapter three) a mode of *languaging*.

This conclusion helps one understand why Lewis says language is not important to myth (in *George MacDonald: An Anthology* and *An Experiment in Criticism*). It is because myth is itself a mode of languaging. It is superior to language (and allegory) because it speaks without abstracting. One can also understand a key part of Tolkien's definition of sub-creation. He says it is something other "than either representation or symbolic interpretation" of the world (49). Sub-creation does not represent, symbolize, or allegorize anything in the real world. A mythopoeic world is entirely its own. The answer to the question, "What does it mean?", is simply, "It means what it is." Mythopoeia does not convey meaning, it simply means.

To say that myth does not symbolize anything in the real world, though, is not to say that it has no connection to the real. Honda claims Lewis's view is that "what is expressed in myth is divine metaphysical Reality" (36). This explains an apparent contradiction with Tolkien's description of myth as "invention about truth" (Carpenter 147). In Lewis's view, truth is first abstract statements about reality. From what has been learned of allegory and mythopoesis, the reader knows that specific abstract ideas, or truth statements, are carried in allegory, not myth. But Tolkien divides truth from ideas/abstraction! The full quote is, "Just as speech is invention about objects and ideas [ . . . ] so myth is invention about truth." But Tolkien gives a specific definition of truth in this context; it is "the eternal truth that is with God" (Carpenter 147). Now the conception of truth learned from Lewis (in chapter three) is that, on earth, truth is abstract statements that correspond with reality; however, in heaven (and perhaps in other "higher" levels of reality between heaven and earth), truth becomes concrete as a quality of the Being of God. This matches Tolkien well. So, following Honda, one concludes that Lewis's ultimate *reality* is Tolkien's *truth*. This is the only way to explain how Lewis can say myth carries no specific truth statements (abstractions are couched in allegory instead), but still shows us something of reality: higher reality. Like that higher reality, the meanings in myth are multiple and deeper, and like that higher reality, abstraction gives way to the concrete in myth so that truth is no longer statement but reality itself, known not through a language which *conveys* meaning but by simply *meaning*.

We saw in chapter three a passage from *That Hideous Strength* (322) in which

concrete language turned fact into perfect meaning. It was suggested then that the language of poetry might be more true to the real than that of abstract reasoning. It appears here that myth is a mode of languaging without propositional abstraction that does not communicate *what* higher reality means; rather, it simply communicates that reality–that is, it simply *means*.

If this conclusion is valid, then one can rewrite Tolkien's scheme of myth to fit Lewis's as follows: "Just as speech is invented abstraction about our earthly experience and ideas, so myth is invented patterns of imagery about the most concrete reality (where even ideas become solid form)." All of this works very well but for one little giant killer of a David to our Goliath: the passage in *Pilgrim's Regress* where Lewis says myth is 'truth, not fact, not the very real' (169). This seeming inconsistency will be explained in a future sub-section. Thus, any conclusions drawn here must be tentative.

But granted this, the contradiction raised occurs not just in the *Regress* passage but in texts on myth as bearing revealed truth (see chapter three), and these texts occur throughout Lewis's life (for example, *Miracles* 31; *Reflections on the Psalms* 90-91). In "Is Theology Poetry?," for example, Lewis says myth can carry truth (82). How is this to be reconciled to the claims seen in this chapter? Myth can bear abstract truths, but not in the one-for-one sense that allegory does. Myth contains a plurality of meanings. A few of those meanings are also truths/correspondences with reality (Lewis says in "Bluspels" that meaning is an antecedent to truth [157]), but more meaning exists in the myth than just those truth correspondences. This is one distinction between myth and allegory. But there is another. The activity of abstracting truths from allegory is more conscious and

analytical. Receiving meaning from myth, though, is imaginative, intuitive. One concludes that, when we find truth in myth, we are not reading it as myth but are allegorizing the myth. Lewis says this is the very thing people constantly do with myth (*Experiment* 44). Though it is not the best way to read myth, that Lewis believes myth contains truth shows that it is a way to read myth. This is true especially when the myth is God's myth, given in the person of Christ ("Myth Became Fact" 66-67) or in God's mythology to the Hebrews (*Miracles* 176*n*.).

The concept of myth as a mode of languaging adds new insight to Lewis's "conversion" letter to Arthur Greeves (18 October 1931) quoted earlier in this sub-section. What strikes the reader most now are the references to meaning, and the phrases, "a myth working on us in the same way" and "one must be content to accept it in the same way" (*Greeves* 427). That Christ's death meant the justification of humanity made no logical sense to Lewis until he allowed that fact to work on him as a myth. Then it made sense, not logical sense but sense nonetheless. Whatever the *kind* of sense was he does not say (perhaps imaginative; the best one can say from the passage is mythical). He only says that, in order to make any sense of the crucifixion, he had to receive it in the "way" one receives a myth. So, the *fact* of the crucifixion did not communicate any meaning to Lewis, but the *myth* of it did, and that was enough to convert him.

The question that remains is how does myth communicate meaning without using language? But even here there is a check. If myth is sacramental (not allegorical), it not only communicates but is itself a communication, a content. What it communicates *is* itself. A better understanding of myth as a form of languaging can be facilitated by

returning to Owen Barfield. His work *Poetic Diction* influenced much of Tolkien's and Lewis's mythopoeic theories (see Kuteeva 268; Honda 36-37). Lewis makes this claim directly: "Much of the thought which he [Barfield] afterward put into *Poetic Diction* had already become mine before that important little book appeared" (*Surprised* 200).

Barfield's contention is that the history of language shows that words in the past did not begin as literal terms which later took on metaphorical meaning. On the contrary, many words taken as literal today are in fact dead metaphors. But far in the past, as the record of words shows, the distinction between literal and figurative simply did not exist in language, and if not in language then not in human thinking. There was no concrete/abstract split in human experience, and therefore no subject/object split. The earliest languages show that human beings did not have separate words for abstract ideas and concrete objects. All words contained both literal and abstract meanings. Why did people use language this way? Because they thought this way (*Poetic Diction* 47-85). Eventually, single meanings in language became divided into "contrasted pairs–the abstract and the concrete, particular and general, objective and subjective" (85). This happened because, again, people started thinking this way. But how is it that people thought the way they did in the past?

Barfield's answer is that "those mysterious relations between separate external objects, and between objects and feelings or ideas [. . . ] exist independently, not indeed of Thought, but of any individual thinker" (86). There are vast relations of meaning in life itself, apart from any such relations people assign with a linguistic label. These relations exist because "Thought" exists independent of human thinkers. There is a

visible parallel in Lewis's system. Before his conversion Lewis saw that Reason must be a quality of God, that God was Reason Himself (*Surprised* 228). Nature is permeated with meaning because it is permeated with Thought.

The ancient languages prove that these meanings or relationships were apprehended by people as "direct perceptual experience" (*Poetic Diction* 86). They "observed a unity" and were not, therefore, "conscious of *relation*" (86). The relation was not a relation but a reality–the objects connected or the object and idea connected were not seen as separate-but-connected; they were seen as one. "But," Barfield continues, "we, in the development of consciousness, have lost the power to see this one as one" (86-87). Lewis chronicles the increasing separation of subject from object from the late Middle Ages to the Romantic Period:

> What proved important (and that slowly) about the new astronomy was not the mere alteration in our map of space but the methodological revolution which verified it. This is not sufficiently described as a change from dogmatism to empiricism. Mere empiricists like Telesius or Bacon achieved nothing. What was fruitful in the thought of the new scientists was the bold use of mathematics in the construction of hypotheses, tested not by observation simply but by controlled observation of phenomena that could be precisely measured. On the practical side it was this that delivered Nature into our hands. And on our thoughts and emotions (which concern a literary historian more) it was destined to have profound effects. By reducing Nature to her mathematical elements it substituted a

> mechanical for a genial or animistic conception of the universe. The world was emptied, first of her indwelling spirits, then of her occult sympathies and antipathies, finally of her colours, smells, and tastes. (Kepler at the beginning of his career explained the motion of the planets by their *animae motrices*; before he died, he explained it mechanically.) The result was dualism rather than materialism. The mind, on whose ideal constructions the whole method depended, stood over against its object in ever sharper dissimilarity. Man with his new powers became rich like Midas but all that he touched had gone dead and cold. This process, slowly working, ensured during the next century the loss of the old mythical imagination: the conceit, and later the personified abstraction, takes its place. Later still, as a desperate attempt to bridge a gulf which begins to be found intolerable, we have the Nature poetry of the Romantics. (*English Literature in the Sixteenth Century* 3-4)

Reality was "once self-evident, and therefore not conceptually experienced," but now such knowing can "only be reached by an effort of the individual mind–this is what is contained in a true poetic metaphor, and every metaphor is true" (88). Barfield explains this latter point in an appendix: "The distinction between true and false metaphor corresponds to the distinction between Myth and Allegory, allegory being a more or less conscious hypostatization of *ideas* [ . . . ] and myth the true child of Meaning, begotten on imagination" (201). Myth, or true metaphor is the act of perceiving a unity (of objects or an object and an idea) not as an abstract relationship but a concrete singularity.

Barfield illustrates:

> We find poet after poet expressing in metaphor and simile the analogy between death and sleep and winter, and again between birth and waking and summer, and these, once more, are constantly made the types of a spiritual experience–of the death in the individual soul of its accidental part and the putting on of incorruption. [ . . . ] Now by our definition of a 'true metaphor', there should be some older, undivided 'meaning' from which all these logically disconnected, but poetically connected ideas have sprung. And in the beautiful myth of Demeter and Persephone we find precisely such a meaning. In the myth of Demeter the ideas of waking and sleeping, of summer and winter, of life and death, of mortality and immortality are all lost in one pervasive meaning. (91)

Different ideas find singular unity in myth. The connections are not logical but associative, visible in the imagination. They are varied and multiple, and so Barfield can say myth is the true child of meaning, that is, in myth there is a multiplicity of meaning. One catches here a hint of Lewis's *The Last Battle*–that world where everything *means* more. "Mythology", Barfield continues, "is the ghost of concrete meaning. Connections between discrete phenomena, connections which are now apprehended as metaphor, were once perceived as immediate realities" (*Poetic Diction* 92).

The implications of Barfield's thought are many. He teaches about the meaning of "meaning." He confirms and adds to the ideas about language and the dilemmas of knowing. He confirms the connections between imagination and myth, and imagination

and meaning (the "Bluspels" passage). Finally, the analysis turned to Barfield in order to find out how myth communicates/is a communication. Myth communicates holistic meaning to our immediate perceptions. It bypasses the abstracting reason and linear (time bound) language (which is to say it bypasses the cognitive space between sign and signified) and enters immediately, intuitively into our understanding so that it is not an object containing meaning, but rather *is* concrete meaning itself. Myth allows subject to commingle with object with greater immediacy and intimacy, and it allows thinking and experiencing to occur simultaneously. The agent of commingling in the human mind, the place into which myth can enter with immediate, intuitive understanding and be, as Barfield says, 'begotten,' is the imagination.

III. Myth and Imagination

If myth is a mode of *languaging* (not a language which contains an abstracting bridge between sign and signified), then myth and imagination are inextricably linked. Chapter three revealed something of the connections between imagination and truth. Now it is important to look at imagination and its connections to myth.

Some of the textual connections in Lewis are blatant, with no need for interpretation. In the essay, "Shelley, Dryden, and Mr. Eliot," Lewis says myth's "primary appeal is to the imagination" (29). Elsewhere he says it is "imagination that makes myth" ("The Funeral of a Great Myth" 91). Again, "the mythopoeic is [ . . . ] a mode of imagination which does something to us at a deep level" ("On Science-Fiction" 67). And for critical confirmation one can turn to Payne's *Real Presence*: "Picture: metaphor, symbol, myth, dreams and visions; these are the language of the

imagination . . ." (154).

Myth and imagination are conjoined; they are not, however, synonymous. Lewis "would have pointed out that while Myths are works of the Imagination, it does not follow that all works of the Imagination are Myths" (Hooper *C. S. Lewis* 571). It is time to define imagination. Lewis's simplest definition of the term occurs in *Miracles*: "We can imagine: that is, we can cause to exist the mental pictures of material objects, and even human characters, and events" (46). Peter Schakel does the work of expanding the definition as well as showing Tolkien's similar thinking and its implications. According to Schakel, Lewis uses the term imagination

> in a number of ways: as the image-making power ("imagine two books lying on a table"), the creative or inventive power ("fired the imagination of the *hrossa*"), the power to make up things ("of course one can imagine things"), the power to create fiction ("solely an imaginative supposal"), the mysteriousness and adventurousness of romance ("almost everything the imagination craves–irony, heroism, vastness, unity in multiplicity, and a tragic close"), and "'Imagination' in some high Coleridgean sense."
>
> The essential concept, however, is that expressed by Tolkien in "On Fairy-Stories": "The human mind is capable of forming mental images of things not actually present. The faculty of conceiving the images is . . . called Imagination" (*Essays Presented to Charles Williams* [London: Oxford University Press, 1947], p. 66). That emphasizes imagination's involvement with the concrete in contrast with reason's

> concern with abstractions; with fiction rather than fact; with making up, "creating," rather than observing; with integration rather than analysis and identification. (*Reason and Imagination* 183)

Schakel's explanation that reason is concerned with abstractions and imagination with the concrete is worthy of explication. A man is a concrete reality; a dictionary definition of a man is an abstraction. An image of a man that one holds in one's head is what? There is a sense in which it is an abstraction. It is certainly a step removed from reality. But one would use the term concrete to refer to the image of the man because it mimics the real man more closely than does the abstract definition. An image of a man in one's head is a copy of what one's senses (which connect a person to reality) take in. A definition, though, is further away from the concrete reality. It is an abstraction.

Lewis describes the importance of imagination throughout his life in a letter to the Milton Society of America:

> The imaginative man in me is older, more continuously operative, and in that sense more basic than either the religious writer or the critic. It was he who, in response to the poetry of others, made me a critic, and, in defense of that response, sometimes a critical controversialist. It was he who, after my conversion led me to embody my religious belief in symbolical or mythopoeic forms, ranging from *Screwtape* to a kind of theological science-fiction. And it was, of course, he who brought me, in the last few years to write the series of Narnian stories for children . . . . (*Letters* 28 December 1954, 444)

There is a sense in which the bifurcated Lewis remained so all his life. He found a place for imagination in his life through reconciling myth to reality (and therefore reason). But Lewis always saw himself in a dual role as thinker and imaginer. Thus he wrote theological and philosophical texts as well as allegory, myth, and fantasy. He also wrote literary criticism, perhaps to satisfy both of his "selves" at once.

The imaginative man, though, understood the power of mythopoeic literature to express his religious beliefs so as to rehabilitate his audience's sensibilities toward such beliefs:

> I saw stories of this kind [the Narnia tales] could steal past a certain inhibition which had paralysed much of my own religion in childhood. Why did one find it so hard to feel as one was told one ought to feel about God or about the sufferings of Christ? I thought the chief reason was that one was told one ought to. An obligation to feel can freeze feelings. And reverence itself did harm. The whole subject was associated with lowered voices; almost as if it were something medical. But supposing that by casting all these things into an imaginary world, stripping them of their stained-glass and Sunday school associations, one could make them for the first time appear in their real potency? Could one not thus steal past those watchful dragons? ("Sometimes Fairy Stories" 37)

Lewis did not believe in altering beliefs to suit people, but he did believe that if the images people wrap around certain ideas could be stripped away to reveal the true power of those ideas, then they might appear more believable and therefore worthy of

intellectual consideration. Imaginations must often be changed before intellects can be reached.

Lewis speaks of the transformative power of imagination and myth in his critique of *The Fellowship of the Ring*, saying:

> If you are tired of the real landscape, look at it in a mirror. By putting bread, gold, horse, apple, or the very roads into a myth, we do not retreat from reality: we rediscover it. As long as the story lingers in our mind, the real things are more themselves. This book applies the treatment not only to bread or apple but to good and evil, to our endless perils, our anguish, and our joys. By dipping them in myth we see them more clearly. ("Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*" 90)

In Honda's words, Lewis's fiction

> makes the readers naturally long to be good without preaching or exhorting. This is because his conviction that the reality is ultimately good and the good is pleasant and stronger than evil is transmitted to them through imagination. They are given some foretaste of the world of Reality, or of heaven, so as to share Lewis's hope and longing for it. (78)

Lewis writes in several passages that this was his specific purpose for his fiction, especially the Ransom trilogy. One was quoted above (the letter of 28 December 1954, *Letters* 444). Another instance is in a letter to Roger Lancelyn Green (28 December 1938), where Lewis says he "had a particular motive in mind when writing *Out of the Silent Planet*: 'I like the whole interplanetary idea as a *mythology* and simply wished to

conquer for my own (Christian) point of view what has always hitherto been used by the opposite side'" (Hooper *Guide* 208). Of course, the other place Lewis suggests this is in *Out of the Silent Planet* itself. Having made himself a character in his own book, the Lewis persona says,

> It was Dr. Ransom who first saw that our only chance was to publish in the form of *fiction* what would certainly not be listened to as fact. He even thought–greatly overrating my literary powers–that this might have the incidental advantage of reaching a wider public [ . . . . ] To my objection that if accepted as fiction it would for that very reason be regarded as false, he replied that there would be indications enough in the narrative for the few readers–the very few–who at *present* were prepared to go further into the matter. [ . . . ] "Anyway," he continued, "what we need for the moment is not so much a body of belief as a body of people familiarized with certain ideas. If we could even effect in one per cent of our readers a change-over from the conception of Space to the conception of Heaven, we should have made a beginning." (153-54)

Of course the book really *is* fiction (at least that is what current Mars images from NASA indicate); Lewis's point is that he is trying to rehabilitate his twentieth-century naturalist audience, trying to raise in them the capacity for imaginative wonder. He is attempting to awaken his audience's imaginations to the possibility of spiritual realities, even if their materialist-clouded reason cannot accept the fact of spiritual realities.[4]

Lewis "ministered," so to speak, to the imagination through myth, but he well

understood the limitations of myth and the need for truth to rise above the panoply of myths. Lewis wrote theology and fiction for people so that, by reason and imagination, they might come to know the one true, factual myth. Hooper summarizes this theme in *The Pilgrim's Regress* as Hooper summarizes:

> In Book VIII, chapter 8, History explains to the pilgrim John that whereas the Landlord (God) gave the Shepherds (the Jews) Rules and set their feet on a 'Road', He gave the Pagans 'pictures'. The mythology of the Pagans contained a 'divine call'. However, they (like Lewis) mistook the 'pictures' and 'desires' for what they were not, and instead of turning to Mother Kirk they became 'corrupt in their *imaginations*'. 'These pictures,' History tells John, 'this ignorance of writing–this endless desire which so easily confuses itself with other desires and, at best, remains pure only by knowing what it does *not* want–you see that it is a starting point from which *one* road leads home and a thousand roads lead into the wilderness.' (*C. S. Lewis* 569-70)

What he covers imaginatively in *Regress*, Lewis rationally explains in *Miracles*. In chapter fourteen Lewis takes up the problem of similarity between the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ and the many fertility myths which embody the annual pattern of death and resurrection in nature (his specific image is of corn as a symbol of the primary food staple for agriculture societies) (*Miracles* 149). He continues:

> For there have, of course, been many religions in which that annual drama (so important for the life of the tribe) was almost admittedly the central

> theme, and the deity–Adonis, Osiris, or another–almost undisguisedly a personification of the corn, a 'corn-king' who died and rose again each year. Is not Christ simply another corn-king?" (149-50).

Lewis's answer to this question is first of all to acknowledge the similarity between Christ and the corn-king deities. But then he wonders why the early Christians never took advantage of or made connection to the imagery of the fertility religions around them: "Corn-religions are popular and respectable: if that is what the first Christian teachers were putting across, what motive could they have for concealing the fact?" (150). Furthermore, the one religion of a "dying God" to rise to prominence in history occurred precisely among a people, the Jews, who knew nothing of the mythic vision of a "dying God." Even Christ, save for some few near references makes no connections to the corn-king myth, to the annual cycle of death and rebirth in nature. Lewis asserts:

> The records, in fact, show us a Person who *enacts* the part of the Dying God, but whose thoughts and words remain quite outside the circle of religious ideas to which the Dying God belongs. The very thing which the Nature-religions are all about seems to have really happened once: but it happened in a circle where no trace of Nature-religion was present. (151)

The answer to this quandary is that Christ was not simply another nature-god but the only God of nature. Yes, He is "the God of wheat and wine and oil. In that respect He is constantly doing all the things that Nature-Gods do: He is Bacchus, Venus, Ceres all rolled into one" (151-52). But at the same time He is not a nature-god. He does not die

and come back to life annually. He is not nature, but its Creator. He is not to be "worshipped with Bacchanalian or aphrodisiac rites" (152). He does not live in nature but outside it. He is "neither the soul of Nature nor her enemy. She is neither His body nor a declension and falling away from Him. She is His creature. He is not a nature-God, but the God of Nature–her inventor, maker, owner, and controller" (152).

Christ is like the corn-king, but He refuses to connect Himself to the mythic deity for a reason. The similarity exists because the "Corn-King is a portrait" of Christ; he is "derived (through human imagination) from the facts of Nature, and the facts of Nature from her Creator; the Death and Re-birth pattern is in her because it was first in Him" (153). Conversely, the elements that make up nature-religion are missing, because in Christ we do not see a model of nature but the original behind it, or, as Lewis puts it, "Where the real God is present the shadows of that God do not appear; that which the shadows resembled does" (153).

The imagination is able to carry images that do and do not correspond with reality. While some mythic images have a partial correspondence, one has a perfect correspondence: the myth that became fact. Lewis wanted people to know truth and the true myth, but he knew that falsehoods and obscuring images could get in the way of right knowing. He believed that the images, though, were far more effective persuaders than the ideas (it was the mythic image of Christ once perceived that pushed him to convert). Thus Screwtape encourages Wormwood to avoid reasoning with his patient:

> Jargon, not argument, is your best ally in keeping him from the Church. Don't waste time trying to make him think that materialism is true! Make

> him think it is strong or stark or courageous–that it is the philosophy of the future . . . .
>
> . . . . . .
>
> they find it all but impossible to believe in the unfamiliar while the familiar is before their eyes. [ . . . ] Do remember you are there to fuddle him. From the way some of you young fiends talk, anyone would suppose it was our job to teach. (*Screwtape* 8, 10)

In the essay "Religion: Reality or Substitute?," Lewis specifically argues that people can reason themselves to any belief they want; it is imagination that maintains belief in the face of contrary appearances. And the battle of faith that goes on in the believer is seldom between faith and reason, but, rather, is between faith and sight (43). To borrow language from "Bluspels," the imagination is far more the "organ" of faith than reason is.

*Perelandra* is a microcosm of the problems people face with knowing and the triple enigma. Chapter three revealed how the Un-man tempted Tinidril the Queen by attacking her reason with untruth, and in chapter two we learned that Ransom will eventually put an end to the temptation by physically killing the Un-man. But before he does so, the Un-man attacks the Queen's imagination with lies that *are* "breathed through silver" (Carpenter 147). He tempts her with a false myth (in fact his attacks on her imagination begin alongside his attack on her reason; he then moves exclusively to imaginative attacks). He begins by painting a picture of the women of Earth:

> "They are a great spirit. They always reach out their hands for the new and unexpected good, and see that it is good long before the men understand it.

> Their minds run ahead of what Maleldil has told them. They do not need to wait for Him to tell them what is good, but know it for themselves as He does. They are, as it were, little Maleldils. And because of their wisdom, their beauty is as much greater than yours. [ . . . ]"
>
> "I wish I could see them."
>
> "I wish you could." (106)

Imagination is the center of the temptation. The Un-man conjures for the Queen's imagination a series of images of noble women, which he hopes she will be enticed to imitate.

He continues his attack against her imagination with visions that, in any other context, would be beautifully heroic (and tragic). He invites her to become a poet, saying, "It is a great branching out. [ . . . ] This making of story or poetry about things that might be but are not" (112). She agrees, saying she has no problem with story-making, but she nevertheless refuses to dwell on the one story which he wants her to imagine: spending the night on the Fixed Land. But the Un-man is tenacious, stubborn; his attack is patiently persistent, like the "indefatigable nagging as of a nasty little boy at a preparatory school" (123).

What follows is a series of stories to which Ransom can never offer sufficient response. The stories are about women of Earth from various historical periods who had lived tragic lives (125). But the women are always exonerated and described with nobility. By sheer repetition, a picture is forcefully created in the Queen's mind. Ransom finally realizes what connects all the stories together:

> Each one of these women had stood forth alone and braved a terrible risk for her child, her lover, or her people. Each had been misunderstood, reviled, and persecuted: but each also magnificently vindicated by the event. The precise details were often not very easy to follow. [ . . . ] What emerged from the stories was rather an image than an idea–the picture of the tall, slender form, unbowed though the world's weight rested upon its shoulders, stepping forth fearless and friendless into the dark to do for others what those others forbade it to do yet needed to have done. (125-26)

The image of the noble martyr, the Romantic vision of the human being who takes on the role of savior, takes the sins of the world upon herself (by committing them), is repeatedly put before the Queen's imagination. The images are attractive because they reveal nobility, self-sacrifice, heroism–all positive qualities. But the true nature of the temptation is base: The Un-man is appealing to Tinidril's vanity. Ransom realizes that unless something is done, the enemy will succeed: "She was still in her innocence. No evil intention had been formed in her mind. But if her will was uncorrupted, half her imagination was already filled with bright poisonous shapes. 'This can't go on,' thought Ransom for the second time. But all his arguments proved in the long run unavailing, and it did go on" (134). Eventually Ransom realizes he must put an end to the temptation through physical confrontation with the Un-man.

## IV. Did Lewis's Post-Conversion View of Myth Change?

As stated before, Peter Schakel, in *Reason and Imagination*, raises the problem of myth in *Pilgrim's Regress* versus "Myth Became Fact." In the first passage, written in

1932, myth is described thus: "It is but truth, not fact" (*Regress* 169). In the second passage, written in 1944, myth is described thus: "What flows into you from the myth is not truth but reality" ("Myth Became Fact" 66). Schakel posits the following explanation:

> Either Lewis was being unusually careless with terminology, or there is a shift in emphasis, a clarification or refinement in his thinking about myth, between the mid–1930's and the mid–1940's. The evidence, considered chronologically, points to the latter. The passage in *The Pilgrim's Regress* closely resembles the letter to Greeves, which was written only two years earlier and thus provides a better basis for understanding *The Pilgrim's Regress* than does an essay written ten years later. There is, for example, the same distinction between God's myth and men's myths, and a striking similarity in wording between "the way in which God chooses to (or can) appear to our faculties" and "the veil under which I have chosen to appear even from the first until now." Most importantly, however, in the letter to Greeves as in *The Pilgrim's Regress*, the emphasis is on the truth of myth. It is not truth as abstract formulations, the way it is used in the later essay, so the two positions are not contradictory. But there is a definite and deliberate assertion that myths are not just falsehoods or errors, perpetrated by pagans; rather, myth contains truth and is one of the means by which God reveals himself to the world. (*Reason and Imagination* 123)

Schakel's conclusions have some validity. There is a difference between the two texts,

and the conversion letter to Arthur Greeves of 18 October 1931 shares terminology with *Regress*, suggesting a definite pattern of thought, not a lapse in terminology. However, what kind of "clarification or refinement" this indicates and when such refinement occurs is debatable. Earlier in this chapter we saw that the term for truth in the Greeves letter is Tolkien's term for truth as higher, or metaphysical reality, and that Lewis eventually substitutes the term "reality" for this "concrete truth." That is certainly a change, not in concept–both words refer not to abstract truth but to higher reality–but in terminology. But what does the change indicate?

Schakel offers the following explanation:

> in reflecting back on his schooling, Lewis says that he was taught the pagan myths were utterly false, "a mere farrago of nonsense." "No one ever attempted to show in what sense Christianity fulfilled Paganism or Paganism prefigured Christianity" [*Surprised by Joy* 62]. In his writings about myth following his conversion, Lewis seems intent on countering that misconception. As yet there is no attempt to describe myth as a "tasting" of Reality, as there will be in "Myth Became Fact"; first must come the emphasis on the value and acceptability of myth because of its basis in truth. (123-24)

Here one can agree with Schakel, although one wonders to what texts he is referring that come between Lewis's conversion and "Myth Became Fact" other than the *Regress* passage. Most of the major texts on myth were produced around the time of, or after, the essay (see below).

Schakel continues:

> That this was his intent comes out explicitly in a long footnote on myth in *Miracles*. It was written, apparently, in 1943 or 1944, about the same time as "Myth Became Fact," though it retains the emphases of *The Pilgrim's Regress*. Lewis specifies that myth cannot be dismissed in the terms his schoolmasters had used: "Myth in general is not merely misunderstood history . . . nor diabolical illusion . . . nor priestly lying." Rather, myth is "a real though unfocused gleam of divine truth falling on human imagination." It is one of the means God used to reveal himself: the mythology of the Hebrews was "the mythology chosen by God to be the vehicle of the earliest sacred truths." Less than a year later, Lewis writes that myth is related to reality, not truth; but there he has moved on to deal with a different threat, that of abstraction, and "truth" is used in a different sense from that in the letter to Greeves, *The Pilgrim's Regress*, *Miracles* and "Is Theology Poetry?" The point is that he has moved on–there is a definite shift of attention, a growth of conception, from the earlier emphasis on myth as revealing truth, to the later emphasis on myth as affording a "taste" of reality. (124)

Schakel turns to the chapter fifteen footnote in *Miracles* as an example of the kind of discussion about the truth of myth that comes between *The Pilgrim's Regress* and "Myth Became Fact," although he admits that the passage was written at about the time of the essay. But here Schakel equivocates. He says *Miracles* was written at about the same

time, in 1943 or 1944. Then a few lines down he writes that "Myth Became Fact" was written less than a year later. Schakel, however, cites no source dating the essay's composition, though it was published in September/October 1944. In an endnote Schakel sends the reader to Green and Hooper for dates on *Miracles*. In the *Companion & Guide*, Hooper says Lewis started *Miracles* in May of 1943, that he had completed about six chapters by September, that in October the manuscript was "still a long way from completion," that a brief version of chapter ten was published in a newspaper in early October 1944, that chapter fourteen was also published in abbreviated form in April of 1945, and that the book was finished by May 1945 (344). In all fairness to Schakel, this information was not detailed for him in Green and Hooper when he was researching his book in the early eighties. Nevertheless, it is clear that he was making an informed guess as to when the footnote to chapter fifteen of *Miracles* was written.

After saying that *Miracles* is written around the time of "Myth Became Fact," Schakel admits that "it retains the emphases of *The Pilgrim's Regress*" (124). It is necessary here to examine the entire footnote which Schakel will proceed to quote:

> A consideration of the Old Testament miracles is beyond the scope of this book and would require many kinds of knowledge which I do not possess. My present view–which is tentative and liable to any amount of correction–would be that just as, on the factual side, a long preparation culminates in God's becoming incarnate as Man, so, on the documentary side, the truth first appears in *mythical* form and then by a long process of condensing or focusing finally becomes incarnate in History. This

involves the belief that Myth in general is not merely misunderstood history (as Euhemerus thought) nor diabolical illusion (as some of the Fathers thought) nor priestly lying (as the philosophers of the Enlightenment thought) but, at its best, a real though unfocused gleam of divine truth falling on human imagination. The Hebrews, like other people, had mythology: but as they were the chosen people so their mythology was the chosen mythology--the mythology chosen by God to be the vehicle of the earliest sacred truths, the first step in the process which ends in the New Testament where truth has become completely historical. Whether we can ever say with certainty where, in this process of crystallisation any particular Old Testament story falls, is another matter. I take it that the memoirs of David's court come at one end of the scale and are scarcely less historical than St. Mark or Acts; and that the Book of Jonah is at the opposite end. It should be noted that on this view (a) Just as god, in becoming Man, is "emptied" of His glory, so the truth, when it comes down from the "heaven" of myth to the "earth" of history, undergoes a certain humiliation. Hence the New Testament is, and ought to be, more prosaic, in some ways less *splendid*, than the Old; just as the Old Testament is and ought to be less rich in many kinds of imaginative beauty than the Pagan mythologies. (b) Just as God is none the less God by being Man, so the Myth remains Myth even when it becomes Fact. The story of Christ demands from us, and repays, not only a religious and

> historical but also an imaginative response. It is directed to the child, the poet, and the savage in us as well as to the conscience and to the intellect. One of its functions is to break down dividing walls. (*Miracles* 176-77*n*.)

The language in the passage is, in fact, amazingly similar to the *Regress* passage, especially the lines, referring to the mythology of the Hebrews. Schakel quotes from the footnote to emphasize its similarity to *Pilgrim's Regress* and its emphasis on revealing truth in myth. One can agree with him for the most part, but the passage has more to offer. Schakel focuses on the first half of the note, but the second half deals with the subtleties of relationship between not only myth and truth but also among myth, truth, and fact.

Lewis makes two key additional points that Schakel does not discuss. In the first point, Lewis says truth "undergoes a certain humiliation" when it leaves the "'heaven' of myth" for the "'earth' of history." It loses the "imaginative beauty" of myth, so the New Testament (having more history and less myth) is "more prosaic" and "less splendid" than the Old which, in turn, is "less rich" than many pagan mythologies. In the second point, the myth of Christ remains a myth, even though it becomes factual in history, and so requires from us an "imaginative" as well as a "religious and historical" response. Taken by itself, the second half of the footnote matches the content of the "Myth Became Fact" essay.

After he quotes from *Miracles*, Schakel says, "Less than a year later, Lewis writes that myth is related to reality, not truth . . ." (124). "Myth Became Fact," however, was probably not written after the *Miracles* quote. Schakel's sentence continues: "but there

he has moved on to deal with a different threat, that of abstraction, and 'truth' is used in a different sense from that in the letter to Greeves, *The Pilgrim's Regress*, *Miracles*, and 'Is Theology Poetry?'" (124). With regard to the first two texts Schakel is right, but he is half wrong about the second two. In the *Miracles* passage Lewis uses the word "truth" in the same way he uses it in *Regress* but also in the same way he uses it in "Myth Became Fact." In the essay, myth is an isthmus between the world of thought and that of fact. In the book myth is "gleams of truth falling on human imagination." The connective quality of myth is there. More obvious though is that, in the essay, 'truth comes down into the valley as abstraction' and, in *Miracles*, truth comes 'down to earth suffering a humiliation' which is a 'loss of imaginative beauty,' that is, truth loses the qualities of mythic form and becomes abstract.

"Is Theology Poetry?" was first read "to the Oxford University Socratic Club on 6 November 1944" (Hooper Preface to *Weight of Glory* xxiii), a month after the publication of "Myth Became Fact." In it, as in *Miracles*, the emphasis is equally two-pronged. Myth is discussed in relation to truth and in relation to reality. On the accusation that resemblances between Christianity and pagan myths prove that Christianity is just another false myth, Lewis counters:

> If you start from the assumption that the Theology is false, the resemblances are quite consistent with that assumption. One would expect creatures of the same sort, faced with the same universe, to make the same false guess more than once. But if you start with the assumption that the Theology is true, the resemblances fit in equally well. Theology, while

saying that a special illumination has been vouchsafed to Christians and (earlier) to Jews, also says that there is some divine illumination vouchsafed to all men. The Divine light, we are told, "lighteneth every man." We should, therefore, expect to find in the imagination of great Pagan teachers and myth makers some glimpse of that theme which we believe to be the very plot of the whole cosmic story–the theme of incarnation, death, and rebirth. [ . . . ] It is not the difference between falsehood and truth. It is the difference between a real event on the one hand and dim dreams or premonitions of that same event on the other. [ . . . ] The earliest stratum of the Old Testament contains many truths in a form which I take to be legendary, or even mythical–hanging in the clouds, but gradually the truth condenses, becomes more and more historical. From things like Noah's Ark or the sun standing still upon Ajalon, you come down to the court memoirs of King David. Finally you reach the New Testament and history reigns supreme, and the Truth is incarnate. And "incarnate" is here more than a metaphor. It is not an accidental resemblance that what, from the point of view of being, is stated in the form "God became Man," should involve, from the point of view of human knowledge, the statement "Myth became Fact." The essential meaning of all things came down from the "heaven" of myth to the "earth" of history. In so doing, it partly emptied itself of its glory, as Christ emptied Himself of His glory to be man. (83-84)

Here Lewis clearly argues that myths contain truth and that the Incarnation is the myth that became fact. Notice the similarity between the final line here and the reference to the myth's humiliation in *Miracles* (177*n*.). Lewis even labels it in the essay as the "humiliation of myth into fact" ("Is Theology Poetry?" 84).[5]

In a key sentence, Schakel says that Lewis uses the word truth "in a different sense" (*Reason and Imagination* 124). Lewis does so because his view of "reality" (and therefore his vocabulary) has changed, which has led, in turn, to a refining of his views on both "myth" and "truth" (see below). In his endnote to this sentence, Schakel interprets "Bluspels and Flalansferes" in an attempt to explain the different uses of truth: "though myth contains truth (in a non-abstract sense of the term), it is not the vehicle of truth (as abstraction)" (197). Schakel is, again, on the right track. There is a concrete truth, but it is to be found on higher levels of reality, and myth models the forms of that reality for human imagination. But when one draws truths out of myth here in the 'valley of separation,' they become abstract.

Again, Schakel argues that in the "Myth Became Fact" essay Lewis has "moved on" to deal with abstraction (124). Then, in the next sentence, he uses this phrase to create a sense of growth in Lewis's thought: "The point is that he has *moved on*–there is a definite shift of attention, a growth of conception, from the earlier emphasis on myth as revealing truth, to the later emphasis on myth as affording a 'taste' of reality" (124, emphasis added). An analysis of the chronology, however, suggests that this is only partially the case. Lewis's concerns about myth as revealing truth continue, appearing in passages in *Miracles*, "Is Theology Poetry?," and in *Reflections on the Psalms* all of

which were written after "Myth Became Fact" (see also "Religion without Dogma"). At the same time, though, a new concern for the relationship between myth and reality is apparent in "Myth Became Fact," in the *Miracles* footnote, and in "Is Theology Poetry?". "Myth Became Fact" is the first time that Lewis discusses the relationship between myth and reality, but his concern for myth and truth continues throughout his life. Thus, though there is a refinement in Lewis's thinking about myth, Lewis does not "move on" so much as he 'adds on,' and what he adds is new understanding about the relationship between myth and sacramental reality.

It is in Lewis's developing view of "reality" that the explanation for the difference between the *Pilgrim's Regress* passage and "Myth Became Fact" is to be found. Remember that a "second Lewis" was identified in chapter two. This was Lewis the idealist. He believed before his conversion in the supremacy and purity of Spirit and the inferiority and impurity of matter. Thus, "higher reality" for Lewis would not have been of the concrete facthood that Lewis came to believe in as a Christian and began describing in the late thirties (see chapter two). Higher reality for the Lewis of 1931 would have been the kind of substanceless ghostliness–as far from any relation to matter as possible–which the later, third Lewis decried. Therefore, when the voice says to John, "it is truth not fact," the context is of a Lewis who favored Platonic truth over physical reality. The phrase that follows can be read in the same way. The voice says it is "an image, not the very real" (*Pilgrim's Regress* 169). In the context of Lewis's idealism, "image" here would mean an image in mythic form of truth that is otherwise pure spirit, and "the very real" here would refer to that higher reality of Spirit which is far divorced

from any earthly fact or even mythic image of it. Once Lewis came to believe fully in the historicity of Jesus as the fulfillment on earth of mythic higher reality, his view of fact began to change. In seeing (as he says in "Myth Became Fact") the significance of the physical Incarnation of God, Lewis began to see physical reality as utterly significant, as sacramental. But he had not yet seen this significance when he wrote the "conversion letter" to Arthur Greeves, nor had he yet perceived the full epistemological implications a year later when he was writing *The Pilgrim's Regress*. It was not so much Lewis's view of myth that changed between his conversion and the mid-forties as it was his view of reality (which *did* cause him to refine his thinking on myth and truth to an extent). He began to focus on reality in his writing in 1938 with *Out of the Silent Planet*. *The Problem of Pain*, the broadcast talks which later became *Mere Christianity*, *The Abolition of Man*, *Miracles*, and the "Myth Became Fact" essay, all written within a decade of each other, show Lewis emphasizing the position of fact or reality in discussions on truth, myth, and epistemology (chapter two). The reader should not be surprised, then, that among such texts Lewis also wrote the triple enigma passage in *Perelandra*. The "refinement in thinking" which Schakel attributes to myth is only a part of Lewis's larger explorations into the epistemological implications of truth, myth, and especially fact/reality. Indeed, as chapter two reveals, Lewis's definitions of truth and myth were refined based on his hierarchical and sacramental understanding of reality. On earth, truth is abstract; in heaven it is concrete. On earth, myth is divorced from history (*Miracles* 177*n*.), except in the single instance of the Incarnation of Christ–when "myth became fact." In heaven, myth is reality, but it is also the source of abstract truth in the

'valley of separation' here below.

In summary, the "Myth Became Fact" essay represents a refinement in Lewis's thinking about myth, but not a completely new view. Much of what Lewis believed about myth at his conversion, especially his concern for the relationship between myth and truth, continues in his writings. Primarily, however, "Myth Became Fact" represents an attempt at synthesizing the three parts of the enigma into an epistemology. Doing so was a major concern of Lewis's writing in the late thirties through mid-forties.

V. Myth and the Dilemmas of Knowing

> Central to Lewis's story [the Space Trilogy] is the sad fact that earth is in a "bent" condition and "silent" state as a result of the fall in Eden. The consequence has been a separation of myth, truth, and fact; body and soul; matter and spirit; God and man. On Perelandra, Ransom recognizes that "the triple distinction of truth from myth and of both from fact was purely terrestrial–was part and parcel of that unhappy division between soul and body which resulted from the Fall." (Sammons 151-52)

Thus Martha Sammons begins a four page study of myth in the Ransom books in *A Far-Off Country*. No critic has come closer than Sammons to understanding the triple enigma and its epistemological implications. She understands that an epistemological dilemma is at the heart of the triple enigma. Having studied myth, we are now ready, with Sammons's prompting, to consider implications of this third element of the enigma on the problem of knowing.

The dilemma of knowing is first described by Lewis as an abstract/concrete split,

an inability to experience a thing and contemplate it simultaneously: "Of this tragic dilemma myth is a partial solution. In the enjoyment of a great myth we come nearest to experiencing as a concrete what can otherwise be understood only as an abstraction" ("Myth Became Fact" 66).

Sammons defines the problem and its causes as follows: "Since the fall in the Garden of Eden, man has separated subject from object, the phenomenal from the invisible numinous world, and *how* he experiences from *what* he experiences. The first result of this split was the demythologization of the physical world, which has taken us further and further away from the meaning of objects" (152). Sammons agrees with several of the conclusions heretofore drawn. She roots the epistemological problem in the fall. She identifies the problem as a subject/object split, and a split between the lower "phenomenal" world and the higher "numinous" world. She also identifies the problem of abstraction: "*how* we experience divided from *what* we experience."

But Sammons goes further when she describes the result of the problem of knowing as a "demythologization of the physical world, which has taken us further and further away from the meaning of objects" (152). Sammons makes myth an integral part of knowing (as Lewis does in "Myth Became Fact") and its absence the cause of the loss of meaning in the world. Chapters two and three covered how the methodology of scientific materialism first reduces reality to individual facts favoring the objective, emptying the objects of their meaning. Then the observer turns the tables on human observational power, reducing man to mere object, proving his every observation is mere subjective response, meaning a complete illusion. Sammons labels this process as

"demythologizing," connecting it to myth through Lewis's "Empty Universe" article. She continues:

> "Reductionists" like Frost [in *That Hideous Strength*] thus see all as "facts," classifying things as either "subjective" or "objective." Consequently, many people believe that only science can put us in touch with reality. Any other type of thought is simply subjective and therefore invalid. The naturalist, Lewis warns, begins to then further strip the universe of its significance by telling us that nothing really exists behind Nature either (*Miracles* 10). In this way, our present world has been drained of qualities of the supernatural and the wonderful. (152-53)

As myth disappears before a system of thought that fosters the subject/object split, meaning is lost and with meaning, knowing.

Sammons places myth at the center of the epistemological problem. She connects it more closely to meaning than this study has done so far, and she emphasizes the connection between meaning and knowing. If myth, then imagination must be an integral part of knowing as well. In the context of the abstract/concrete dilemma Sammons states the following:

> Because man will always be limited in his knowledge because of this gap between experience and perception, he needs both reason and imagination. As J. R. R. Tolkien explains in "On Fairy Stories," [sic] the "secondary world" created by the imagination presents the world that lies behind appearances. Since this world, in fact, is even more real than the

> world of "fact" we see in space and time, both worlds are necessary parts of the whole truth. (153)

Knowing involves connections between the knower and a multi-leveled reality. There is the phenomenal world and a higher world (or worlds) that "lies behind appearances," which Sammons earlier described as "numinous." Chapter three covered the conduits that connect humanity to the real: authority, revelation and, especially, reason (and language) in our present existence, and spirit in higher realms. But now one must add myth and imagination as conduits that connect humanity, especially, to this numinous higher reality.

Imagination and myth connect thinking with experiencing. In imagination and myth the space of abstraction between sign and signified is bypassed (if not eliminated) and knowing becomes more immediate, akin to experience but without the loss of awareness that often accompanies experience. In this context, myth and imagination provide immediate meaning that is known experientially, without the need for time-bound, abstracting analysis; however, such meaning is known with the kind of conscious awareness that occurs in careful analysis. Thus, imagination as a faculty for knowing and myth as an object of knowing are the last vestiges of a time in human history when subject and object were more closely connected because matter and spirit were more closely connected.

It was earlier argued that spirit is the conduit that joins subject to object, bridging the separation between abstract and concrete thinking. Sammons speaks similarly in terms of matter and spirit. Prior to her account of the problem of knowing as reviewed

above, she focuses first on *Perelandra* and the coming together of myth and fact, and second on *That Hideous Strength* which "suggests that once things even on earth were not as 'separate' as they are now. Merlin is the 'last vestige of an old order in which matter and spirit were, from our modern point of view, confused'" (Sammons 152). In *Hideous*, Dimble describes the conditions to which Sammons is referring: "The Earth itself was more like an animal in those days. And mental processes were much more like physical actions" (284).

From the enigma passage in *Perelandra* one learns that the world has changed as a result of a process that began in the Fall (144), but a living world in which "mental processes are more like physical actions" (*Hideous* 284) is the very point Barfield argues from the evidence of philology in *Poetic Diction*. There he argues that myth was born of a time when "our distinction between subjective and objective cannot have existed" (204). The age of myth-making occurred in "pre-logical times." Logical thinking, or "discursive thought operating in abstract ideas" depends upon a "subjective–or *self*–consciousness" (204). Barfield claims that no such subjectivity–the separation of self from objective reality–existed till later in human history. It developed gradually–in an evolutionary fashion–and "was associated with the origin and development of language" (*Saving the Appearances* 169). This is why humanity was a race of myth-makers before one of philosophers. Meaning permeated the world in the earlier age, apart from individual thinkers (*Poetic Diction* 86), and relationships were perceived as realities in the world, not just thoughts in the mind (hence Lewis's comment: "mental processes were much more like physical actions").

Barfield is adamant: "the dualism, *objective: subjective*, is fundamental neither psychologically, historically, nor philosophically" (*Poetic Diction* 204). He argues that "the distinction of objective from subjective is a relatively late arrival in human consciousness" and that "the seemingly fundamental distinction between self and world" is not fundamental at all (206). Barfield claims that the dilemma of thinking versus experiencing (which Lewis raises in "Myth Became Fact") did not exist in the past. Only when humanity began to distinguish between self and world did there begin to arise a distinction between "thinking and perceiving." Originally, thinking was "at the same time perceiving–a picture thinking, a figurative, or imaginative, consciousness, which we can only grasp today by true analogy with the imagery of our poets, and, to some extent, with our own dreams" (206-07).

One may question the extent to which Barfield carries his conclusions. Is he saying, for example, that, in the "pre-logical" period, there was no concept among human beings of an "I"? Rather than turning to an in-depth critique of Barfield, however, we need only remember that, though Lewis was influenced by Barfield, he does not attempt to explain the nature of human consciousness to the extent or in the same way that Barfield does. Lewis believes that the fall of man led to a subject/object split in human knowing, that human consciousness in the past involved "mental processes being much more like physical actions" (*That Hideous Strength* 284), that the subject/object split led to a separation of concrete experiencing and abstract thinking, and that this separation developed over a period of time beginning from the fall. Recall that Lewis traced a thousand years of this development briefly in *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century*

(3-4), and in *Miracles* he predicts its conclusion, an end to the subject/object split and the problem of knowing:

> The old, richly imaginative thought, which still survives in Plato has to submit to the deathlike, but indispensable, process of logical analysis: nature and spirit, matter and mind, fact and myth, the literal and the metaphorical, have to be more and more sharply separated, till at last a purely mathematical universe and a purely subjective mind confront one another across an unbridgeable chasm. But from this descent also, if thought itself is to survive, there must be a re-ascent and the Christian conception provides for it. Those who attain the glorious resurrection will see the dry bones clothed again with flesh, the fact and myth remarried, the literal and the metaphorical rushing together. (211-12)

Lewis's ultimate solution to the dilemmas of knowing is an eschatological one. A new nature is to come wherein heaven and earth, the worlds of spirit and matter, become one (211). The old shadowlands will end. Real life will begin.

The coming together of the literal and the metaphorical in the last quotation provides a transition to questions regarding language and the problem of knowing. The previous chapter posited dual roles for truth, reason, and language. In our world they are tools for knowing; in heavenly realms they are personifications: Truth, Reason, and Language Himself. As such, what are abstracting tools for knowing on earth are concrete realities in heaven. On our silent planet, truth is merely a correspondence between reality and mind. Language is the mode of operation whereby mind connects to reality, thus

bringing meaning from the particulars of reality. But when Language Himself–or some Mercurian mediator herein called language-as-spirit–affects us, we are connected so perfectly to reality that abstract truth is transcended and fact becomes so completely known as not to be object but meaning itself. A metaphor of distance used earlier to describe why truth can only come to us in a splintered fashion through myth can be applied here. The shorter the distance, the closer we draw to the Person of Language, the more unified knowing becomes.

But now a new mediator enters the picture, one that acts like a language but is not language, nor does it depend on language to be communicated. Myth can be communicated in ways other than language, and it communicates more than language can: "Because it is so much 'larger' than words, myth allows us to go beyond the limitations of language" (Sammons 154). Myth solves the problem of knowing by removing abstraction from the equation. In myth the object is not external to the subject once the story pattern is perceived. The myth is a real object of thought intended not to represent reality outside itself (though such representations occur when we allegorize from myth), but to be simply what it is, a pattern of the reality *behind* (not a pattern *about* that reality but an actual taste of the reality itself).

How is myth to be included in the model of truth, reason, and language? Myth draws the imagination toward concrete knowing here in the "valley of abstraction." It is able to do what truth and reason cannot do on the silent planet. Language can come closer to doing what myth does in metaphor as will be shown momentarily, but is myth transformed in higher realities as are truth and language? The first point to note is an

exact reversal. When truth and language ascend they take on concrete form in spirit. But when myth descends to the realm of fact, it retains its mythic qualitites; this is especially the case the one time that myth became fact. The pattern of the very real was borne out in history and was no less a myth for actually happening. That, says Lewis, is the miracle of it (*Miracles* 177*n*.).

The second point then is a question: Does myth take on the quality that truth, reason, and language have in the higher reality? Is myth an attribute of God like goodness is? Lewis does not explicitly answer this question, but two conjectures may offer a further insight into the difference between myth and language. First, if myth is a pattern of the very real, then God is Myth Himself for He is the most concrete reality of all, and He patterns all created reality after Himself. Next, the central content of myth is a pattern in images. Furthermore, Lewis first discovered Joy in images of beauty (the toy garden his brother made) and in mythic images (not even a complete mythic pattern or story–he read from Tegnor's Drapa: "I heard a voice that cried, / Balder the Beautiful / Is dead, is dead–" and was swept away into Joy [*Surprised* 17]). Finally, Lewis associates Joy with the glimpsing of God's glory ("Weight" 13-17). Here then is the second conjecture: Echoing St. Paul's letter to the Philippians, Lewis says Christ emptied Himself of *glory* in order to descend to earth (*Miracles* 177*n*.). Christ is *not* the myth become fact so much as His lived story *is*. Instead, myth is the manifested glory of God, the visible beauty that radiates from His person and falls to earth in momentary images producing the ecstasy of Joy. On earth it comes in story and beauty, but in heaven it is God Himself. Christ came self-emptied of glory and lived a story of glory in His coming.

Prior to the coming of Christ, God communicated to fallen man most directly through revelation recorded in scripture. He spoke words to Moses and Isaiah, for example, who then recorded them as commandments and prophecies. In Christ, however, God communicated Himself experientially, in the form of a myth that was also lived story, that is, history. From these two approaches to revelation, one can better see the distinction between myth and language.

Word and myth, then, are modes of communication that differ in manifestation. Perhaps word is more for the mind and body, and myth more for the heart and soul. But myth can communicate with immediacy, as a real object, while word is abstract here in the "valley of separation." However, Barfield has introduced us to the "true metaphor" (*Poetic Diction* 87), a poetic constructing of language which yields meaningful connection between objects where the connection itself, the relationship, takes on the quality of the very real. Metaphor is where language can come close to being concrete here in the lower world. In the highest reality, language is a Person, connecting subject to object so completely that object is converted to meaning, and knowing to experience. But in our phenomenal world, language abstracts the real; nevertheless, in metaphor language is able to come closer to fulfilling its function of uniting thinking and experiencing in the knower. It is the counterpart in nature to the supernatural Word Himself who, when He came to earth, came as the metaphor of God, what Hebrews 1.3 calls "the exact representation" of God.

## VI. Fact, Truth, and Myth

Defining myth will invariably include questions about its relation to fact and to truth. What we find in Lewis is what the triple enigma importunes. Myth is different from fact and truth, though it has similarities to both.

There are, first of all, clear examples in Lewis where myth stands in contrast to fact. One occurs in *Out of the Silent Planet*. Upon looking at a pictorial representation of the creatures on Mars digging the canals or *handramits*, Ransom wonders "whether this were a mythical account of the making of *handramits* or whether they were conceivably artificial in fact" (111). What is most interesting about this passage is its contrast to one later in the book, where Ransom's thinking clearly has changed: "It even occurred to him that the distinction between history and mythology might be itself meaningless outside the Earth" (144-45). At the beginning of his journey Ransom distinguished between myth and fact. By its end, he saw a potential harmony between them. But notice that "outside the Earth" is where the distinction fades. On earth it remains. This fictional vision matches Lewis's cosmos of multiple realities well. In our present reality, myth remains divorced from reality except in special instances.

Ransom's intrusion into the world of Perelandra proves a similar occurrence. If his story in *Out of the Silent Planet* can be summarized as an education in new facts, in the possibility that reality might not be filled with horror but mythic wonder, his story in *Perelandra* can be summarized as an education in the possibility that he might have to participate in mythic action. Early in the novel, Ransom sees a red-gold dragon curled around a tree and recognizes "the garden of the Hesperides at once" (45). He recalls his visit to Mars and wonders, "Were all things which happened as mythology on earth

scattered through other worlds as realities?" (45). Later, "he had a sensation not of following an adventure but of enacting a myth" (47). Later still, Ransom faces the crisis which leads to the enigma passage. A voice, a presence, has been guiding him to the realization that he must physically fight the Un-man. But Ransom thinks that to do so "would degrade the spiritual warfare to the condition of mere mythology" (143). Then, of course, he realizes "that the triple distinction of truth from myth and of both from fact was purely terrestrial . . ." (143-44). He understands that he *is* there to enact a myth.

Outside the lower world, myth corresponds to reality. Heaven is mythic, and through myths of earth "[s]omething really 'higher' is occasionally glimpsed . . ." (Tolkien 51). In addition to this glimpse, there has been an intrusion of myth into the post-lapsarian world. The Incarnation is myth become fact. But Lewis hints at the possibility of other intrusions as well. The reader has already seen the intrusion of revelation–myth come to earth in mythology, in story; however, the hints Lewis gives go further. There is a moment in *Perelandra* when Ransom wonders if there had been a time "when satyrs danced in the Italian woods" (102).

A more significant moment occurs shortly after the triple enigma passage. Ransom is still struggling with the decision to fight the Un-man when the unspeaking voice says to him, "It is not for nothing that you are named Ransom" (147). At this point Ransom is sure the voice in his head is not his own:

> He knew it for a very curious reason–because he had known for many years that his surname was derived not from *ransom* but from *Ranolf's son*. It would never have occurred to him thus to associate the two words.

> [ . . . ] All in a moment of time he perceived that what was, to human philologists, a merely accidental resemblance of two sounds, was in truth no accident. The whole distinction between things accidental and things designed, like the distinction between fact and myth, was purely terrestrial. The pattern is so large that within the little frame of earthly experience there appear pieces of it between which we can see no connection, and other pieces between which we can. Hence we rightly, for our use, distinguish the accidental from the essential. But step outside that frame and distinction drops down into the void, fluttering useless wings. He had been forced out of the frame, caught up into the larger pattern. (147-48)

The "larger pattern" is myth. The distinction between 'things accidental and designed' is terrestrial, but this is entirely perceptual. Except for "glimpses between," the design is invisible, but it still is the design, the pattern, for all of creation, including mankind's phenomenal world. The pattern permeates the earth.

In this context one better understands Lewis's answer to the following rhetorical question:

> "But why", (some ask), "why, if you have a serious comment to make on the real life of men, must you do it by talking about a phantasmagoric never-never land of your own?" Because, I take it, one of the main things the author wants to say is that the real life of men is of that mythical and heroic quality. ("Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*" 89)

Life itself is mythic, says Lewis. Reality on earth is intimately tied to the mythic reality

of the spiritual world.

What, then, can be concluded about the relationship between myth and fact? There are similarities and differences. Myth is the pattern of higher reality, the action of being both created and uncreated. Myth permeates our existence but at the same time is withdrawn from the fallen world so that its visible manifestations come not as human history but as glimpses (of the heavenly pattern) in revelation, religion, and story. Perhaps myth intrudes in the world more often and is the substance of miracle, but, if not, myth *has* intruded at least once so completely into the lower world as to become historical fact: the Incarnation. If one applies the metaphor of a spectrum, one might say that at one extreme is where the heavenly pattern is its most visible glory and its most factual or real. At the other end of the spectrum is that which is farthest from history and least influenced by Divine illumination, more human or even diabolical.

The relationship between myth and truth is also one of similarity and difference. Myth is placed over against truth before Lewis's conversion, as has been seen. But after his conversion a distinction remains. In "The Funeral of a Great Myth" Lewis notes how sometimes he wishes the great Myth of the Evolution of the Cosmos and Man "was not mythical, but true" (88). By "true" here Lewis means having a correspondence with reality.

In a passage in *Miracles* one sees myth as distinct from truth, yet somehow carrying it:

> All over the world, until quite modern times, the direct insight of the mystics and the reasonings of the philosophers percolated to the mass of

> the people by authority and tradition; they could be received by those who were no great reasoners themselves in the concrete form of myth and ritual and the whole pattern of life. In the conditions produced by a century or so of Naturalism, plain men are being forced to bear burdens which plain men were never expected to bear before. We must get the truth for ourselves or go without it. (59)

Thus, truth as ascertained by reason and revelation in the past could be communicated to average people through concrete forms like myth, ritual, and life itself. Since the emergence of naturalism this is no longer the case. People must find truth on their own. Notice that myth and truth are clearly not the same thing but are just as clearly related. As has been shown, truth in the abstract is communicated through, carried in, concrete myth.

Chapter two covered Lewis's preference for figurative language over supposed literal language (he disagreed with using the term "force" instead of "spirit" to describe life, for example). Lewis pointed out that this was merely substituting one metaphor (of something like electricity) for another. In referring to the problem of animal pain in *The Problem of Pain*, Lewis suggests demonic influence and then defends his choice of words:

> If it offends less, you may say that the 'life-force' is corrupted, where I say that living creatures were corrupted by an evil angelic being. We mean the same thing: but I find it easier to believe in a myth of gods and demons than in one of hypostatised abstract nouns. And after all, our mythology

> may be much nearer to literal truth than we suppose. (135-36)

Here Lewis emphasizes the importance of concrete, imaginative language as the better tool for delivering a myth, better than abstract nouns, but he also suggests in the phrase "literal truth" a correspondence between myth and fact/history. Here is another suggestion (like the satyrs in the Italian woods) that there may have been moments, other than the Incarnation, in which the world of myth intruded into the world of earthly fact, thus making myth true in the lower world. But Lewis does not say this of all myth in this passage, only of "our mythology," that is, the Hebrew/Christian story of the fall.

The triple enigma acts as a map for explorations into Lewis's epistemology. Further study, however, is necessary for a more complete understanding. Though the important concepts of "reason" and "imagination" have been touched on in regard to their connections to truth and myth, a more thorough review of these terms must be undertaken.

Notes

[1] Page 114 in the edition of *Surprised* used in this study.

[2] The account of this conversation is based on Tolkien's poem 'Mythopoeia', to which he also gave the titles 'Misomythos' and 'Philomyth to Misomyth'. One manuscript is marked 'For C. S. L.' (Carpenter's note).

[3] Lewis explains this point on a previous page in *Experiment*: Mythic story has "a value independent of its embodiment in any literary work" (41).

[4] For a recent and more detailed explication on Lewis's use of myth and fantasy to rehabilitate the human imagination, see Kath Filmer-Davies's essay "Fantasy" in *Reading the Classics with C. S. Lewis* (285-296).

[5] As a final textual proof, consider *Reflections on the Psalms*, which Lewis wrote in the mid-fifties. In *Psalms* Lewis is still concerned with the relationship between myth and truth:

> Other Christians who think, as I do, that in mythology divine and diabolical and human elements (the desire for a good story), all play a part, would say: "[ . . . ] In the sequence of night and day, in the annual death and rebirth of the crops, in the myths which these processes gave rise to, in the strong, if half-articulated, feeling (embodied in many Pagan "Mysteries") that man himself must undergo some sort of death if he would truly live, there is already a likeness permitted by God to that truth on which all depends. The resemblance between these myths and the Christian truth is no

more accidental than the resemblance between the sun and the sun's reflection in a pond . . . ." (89-90)

## Chapter Five

## Reason and Imagination

### REASON

Set on the soul's acropolis the reason stands
A virgin, arm'd commercing with celestial light,
And he who sins against her has defiled his own
Virginity: no cleansing makes his garment white;
So clear is reason. But how dark imagining,
Warm, dark obscure and infinite, daughter of Night:
Dark is her brown, the beauty of her eyes with sleep
Is loaded, and her pains are long, and her delight.
Tempt not Athene, Wound not in her fertile pains
Demeter, nor rebel against her mother-right.
Oh who will reconcile in me both maid and mother,
Who make in me a concord of the depth and height?
Who make imagination's dim exploring touch
Ever report the same as intellectual sight?
Then could I truly say, and not deceive,
Then wholly say, that I BELIEVE. (*Poems* 81)

This poem, written around the time of Lewis's conversion (Hooper *C. S. Lewis* 599), chronicles the tension in the bifurcated Lewis who could be convinced to believe by neither "reason" nor "imagination" alone but only by both together. Having looked at

each alone, we must also consider imagination and reason together for further understanding, but the scope of this chapter goes beyond a mere study of reason and imagination. Here studies begun on reason and imagination in chapters three and four are completed, and reason and imagination are studied as complementary modes of knowing. This chapter also considers whether Lewis's post-conversion view of imagination altered, and reviews Lewis's "Great War" with Owen Barfield. In addition, conclusions on the concepts of "symbol," "allegory," and "metaphor," are drawn (helped in part by a fuller reading of the "Bluspels and Flalansferes" essay) and we continue exploring Lewis's view of "meaning."

## I. Reason

Much was revealed about Lewis's view of reason in chapter three. Reason is a process that allows human beings to know about external reality. It allows one to make truth statements about reality that correspond to reality. Against a variety of attacks (see below), Lewis defends the ability of reason to give real insight into reality. The process by which reason works begins with facts, that is reality itself, and self-evident truths or intuitions which are grasped as immediately obvious apart from discursive thought. What follows in the act of reasoning, then, is the arranging of facts so that a series of intuitions result that, when linked together, produce a proof of truth (or falsehood if there is no correspondence with reality). This argument (from *Miracles*) is succinctly recorded in the minutes of the Oxford Socratic Club where Lewis read a paper on "The Nature of Reason":

> We were said to be reasoning when the terms *must* and *must not*

> were used rather than *is* and *is not*, the language of observation. Thus in geometry we proved that if certain things were true, therefore other things *must be* true. Thus reason involved three things:
>
> 1. A field of material under consideration;
> 2. If certain things are true. These truths Mr. Lewis called the *data*;
> 3. Therefore, implying a principle by which to reason.
>
> It was the third of these things that reason provided by the principle of non-contradiction. Reason was therefore defined as the application of self-evident principles to material which afforded a datum. (qtd. in Hooper "Oxford's Bonny Fighter" 152)

The moment of reasoning occurs when one moves from descriptive statements (statements of facts) to inferential statements (from "what is" to "what *must* follow"). Facts are first grouped in the process, then the obvious conclusion made intuitionally visible from the grouping. The principle of this visibility is the "principle of non-contradiction." A person arranges two sets of facts: A = B and B = C. An inference then becomes immediately visible: A = C. This is the act of reasoning.

Louis A. Markos has recently attempted to describe Lewis's approach to reason, noting that Lewis's is a deductive method, beginning with "abstract premises and general assumptions and work[ing] its way downward toward a specific conclusion," and the modernist approach is typically inductive, beginning "with observed facts and figures and then proceed[ing] upward toward a more abstract hypothesis or inference" (37). Markos

overgeneralizes, however, especially about Lewis. It is more accurate to say that Lewis uses both methods effectively. His starting point is either rooted in fact, an inductive approach, or in first principles, a deductive approach. For example, Lewis's argument for the Moral Law in the opening book of *Mere Christianity* is an inductive one, reasoning from events in human experience to the general principle. Lewis's method in "Why I Am Not a Pacifist," though, shows excellent deductive reasoning. He begins the essay with a specific topic (pacifism), but rather than continue with the topic, he turns to a lesson on a higher principle. Lewis moves from the single moral issue to the issue of how one can make any moral judgments at all. As he answers this question, he gives the reader the deductive tools necessary for reasoning about pacifism or any other moral issue.

Chapter three revealed that Lewis believed (as stated in *Miracles*) the primary distinction between his view of reason and that of the modernists was that the modernists confuse cause/effect thinking for ground/consequent thinking. Inference is denied and replaced with simple causation, and "Bulverism" (see below) is the resulting mistake. What many modernists deny is the validity of reason altogether. Lewis's responses to this are several and will be reviewed shortly. But Lewis was adamant that reason's purpose is to find truth, or connect the subjective self with a real objective external reality. Reason does not exist as a recreational activity; it exists to be a conduit between mind and reality and it is capable of working despite finite limitations and problems with the subjective knower.

Chapter three also concluded that feeling must be treated cautiously in the reasoning process. Our feelings can sway us to develop reasons for or against any belief.

Reason, moreover, is not the enemy of faith. Faith is believing what is reasonably held until appearances (not reasons) or feelings suggest otherwise. What wars against faith is not reason so much as it is sight. The reader also learned from chapter three that evolution cannot explain the rise of reason. An organism *responding* to the environment is not the same as its making *inferences* about it.

We have seen Lewis respond in varying degree to two arguments attacking reason. These arguments appear in two forms of "subjectivism," one Freudian in origin, the other influenced by scientific materialism. Lewis responds to the first attack in the essay "Bulverism." Lewis describes this Freudian assault on reason as showing "*that* a man is wrong before you start explaining *why* he is wrong" (273). Thus the Freudian would explain a person's belief in heaven as "wish fulfillment" (272). Lewis called this *Bulverism* after an imaginary man named Ezekiel Bulver who first understood this principle, "when he heard his mother say to his father–who had been maintaining that two sides of a triangle were together greater than the third–'Oh you say that *because you are a man*'" (273). The modern psychological argument against reason is to say that all human reasons are caused by genetics, chemistry, or environment. Lewis's response is his typical one: "The forces discrediting reason, themselves depend on reasoning. You must reason even to Bulverize. You are trying to *prove* that all *proofs* are invalid. If you fail, you fail. If you succeed, then you fail even more–for the proof that all proofs are invalid must be invalid itself" (274).

The second attack on reason is born of scientific materialism but shares the same preconception as the Freudian mistake. Lewis introduces the idea in "Meditation in a

Toolshed" when he notes the difference between "seeing through" and "seeing along" a beam of light that is shining through a crack in his otherwise darkened toolshed (212). He applies the experience to the scientific materialist's view of reason: the scientist believes that, by seeing *through* reality to some supposed hidden reality beneath, he is seeing the very real. His failure is not perceiving that he must also be using some method by which to see. He is seeing *along* as well. Thus the scientist uses reason (not knowing that he is doing so) to prove that our reasons are invalid (214-15). But Lewis would say that "you cannot go on 'explaining away' forever [ . . . . ] If you see through everything, then everything is transparent. But a wholly transparent world is an invisible world. To 'see through' all things is the same as not to see" (*Abolition of Man* 91).

The final topic of this sub-section begins with Lewis's idea that reason is supernatural. Schakel claims that, for Lewis, "reason exists on its own, independent of Nature" (*Reason and Imagination* 135). Lewis says, "A man's Rational thinking is just so much of his share in eternal Reason as the state of his brain allows to become operative. [ . . . ] The various and complex conditions under which Reason and Morality appear are the twists and turns of the frontier between Nature and Supernature" (*Miracles* 56). Earlier in *Miracles* Lewis asserts:

> The knowledge of a thing is not one of the thing's parts. In this sense something beyond Nature operates whenever we reason. I am not maintaining that consciousness as a whole must necessarily be put in the same position. Pleasures, pains, fears, hopes, affections and mental images need not. No absurdity would follow from regarding them as parts

> of Nature. The distinction we have to make is not one between "mind" and "matter," much less between "soul" and "body" (hard words, all four of them) but between Reason and Nature: the frontier coming not where the "outer world" ends and what I should ordinarily call "myself" begins, but between reason and the whole mass of non-rational events whether physical or psychological. (36-37)

That reason is rooted in the eternal is important for the validation of reason. If human thought is not *merely* human thought then it can be a "reflection of reality" ("De Futilitate" 61). Says Lewis,

> we must give up talking about 'human reason'. In so far as thought is merely human, merely a characteristic of one particular biological species, it does not explain our knowledge. Where thought is strictly rational it must be, in some odd sense, not ours, but cosmic or super-cosmic. It must be something not shut up inside our heads but already 'out there'–in the universe or behind the universe: either as objective as material Nature or more objective still. Unless all that we take to be knowledge is an illusion, we must hold that in thinking we are not reading rationality into an irrational universe but responding to a rationality with which the universe has always been saturated. (65)

It is only by concluding that reason is rooted in the eternal that it can be held as valid. No materialistic system can find a place for genuine reason in a completely natural universe.

Conversely, Lewis shows, only a belief in reason as supernatural can explain why

human reasoners often make mistakes:

> I have tried to show that you reach a self-contradiction if you say that logical inference is, in principle, invalid. On the other hand, nothing is more obvious than that we frequently make false inferences: from ignorance of some of the factors involved, from inattention, from inefficiencies in the system of symbols (linguistic or otherwise) which we are using, from the secret influence of our unconscious wishes or fears. We are therefore driven to combine a steadfast faith in inference as such with a wholesome scepticism about each particular instance of inference in the mind of a human thinker. As I have said, there is no such thing (strictly speaking) as *human* reason: but there is emphatically such a thing as human thought–in other words, the various specifically human conceptions of Reason, failures of complete rationality, which arise in a wishful and lazy human mind utilizing a tired human brain. The difference between acknowledging this and being sceptical about Reason itself, is enormous. For in the one case we should be saying that reality contradicts Reason, whereas now we are only saying that total Reason–cosmic or super-cosmic Reason–*corrects* human imperfections of Reason. (67-68)

With the establishment of reason, Lewis is able to argue on several of the fronts seen in previous chapters. If a reasoning God, then a good one (69). If a good God then a moral universe, one to which humanity is not alien (70-71), one which we are genuinely

connecting to by reason, one in which we can even believe in the objective reality of beauty and our responses to it (71).

II. Imagination

Lewis defines kinds of imagination in four texts. In *Letters to Malcolm*, Lewis refers to the "visual imagination" which is a "compulsion," an instinctive activity of the human mind. But this "compulsion to visualize" is not "'Imagination' in the higher sense, not the Imagination which makes a man either a great author or a sensitive reader" (85). In both *An Experiment in Criticism* and "Psycho-Analysis and Literary Criticism," Lewis distinguishes between "Egoistic" and "Disinterested" imagination (*Experiment* 52). The former is "enslaved to the wishes of its owner for whom it has to provide imaginary gratifications" ("Psycho-Analysis" 290). The latter is called a "free" activity of imagination because it is unconstrained by the ego's impulse to "castle-building" (*Experiment* 53; "Psycho-Analysis" 290). This dichotomy appears as the first two elements in a list of three in *Surprised by Joy*:

> imagination is a vague word and I must make some distinctions. It may mean the world of reverie, daydream, wish fulfilling fantasy. Of that I knew more than enough. I often pictured myself cutting a fine figure. But I must insist that this was a totally different activity from the invention of Animal-Land. Animal-Land was not (in that sense) a fantasy at all. I was not one of the characters it contained. I was its creator, not a candidate for admission to it. Invention is essentially different from reverie [ . . . . ] In my daydreams I was training myself to be a fool; in mapping and

chronicling Animal-Land I was training myself to be a novelist. (15)

Imagination as "reverie," "daydream," or "fantasy," corresponds to the "Egoistic" imagination of the "Psycho-Analysis" essay (where the imagination is used only for self-gratification). "Invention," corresponds to the "Disinterested" imagination (where genuine artistic creation is possible). But to these categories Lewis adds a third kind of imagination, which he associates with Joy (*Surprised* 16-18).

Schakel notes that there is a "deliberate pattern of references linking 'Joy' with 'imagination'" in *Surprised by Joy* (*Reason and Imagination* 156). Honda rightly explains that Joy "is a medium with which to get a glimpse of supernatural Reality," and she connects this medium to the imagination: "imagination for Lewis is, first of all, a faculty that leads man to God through the ever unsatisfied desire" (9). Early in the autobiography, Lewis does not define what he means when referring to "imagination in a third sense, and the highest sense of all" (*Surprised* 15-16). He merely goes on to describe certain kinds of imaginative experiences that exemplify this third sense. He calls these experiences of "Joy" (18). Later in the book, he refers to imagination "in some high Coleridgean sense" (203), and here he may mean the link between imagination and Joy. In experiencing Joy, the imagination becomes a "power of intuition into the metaphysical reality of this world and heaven, and a power of communication of that reality" (Honda 1). As such, the imagination is a powerful tool for knowing the very real. In Lewis's second sense of the word "imagination" (the category labeled "invention" or "Disinterested imagination" above), people actively use their imaginations to make meaning, create stories, translate abstractions into images. But in Joy, the imagination is

acted upon. It may need to be tuned and exercised in order to receive the glimpse of glory, but the moment is one of received revelation more than active imagining. Nevertheless, as the receiver of experiences of Joy, the imagination fulfills an important role in our ability to know the real. Thus, when Lewis refers to a "third sense" of the term "imagination," he means not so much the imagination itself as the revelatory experience of Joy in the imagination.

A most important theme in Lewis's writings about imagination involves his desire to use imagination to rehabilitate the beliefs of those who "are simply turned off by traditional religious forms. Christianity seems obscure, irrelevant, distant, dead. But an imaginative presentation of this same content can wipe away the dust and allow the true essence of holiness to shine through" (Burson & Walls 166). Lewis called this approach "steal[ing] past those watchful dragons" ("Sometimes Fairy Stories" 37); therefore, instead of referring to demons in *That Hideous Strength*, for example, he refers to "macrobes" (256), a word which would not conjure up in his audience unbelievable images of red suited goat-men with pitchforks.

Lewis criticism frequently refers to Lewis's attempts to "smuggle in" his beliefs to his readers. This phrase is Lewis's own from a letter in which he notes that almost all the reviews of *Out of the Silent Planet* completely missed the Christian elements in the story. Lewis said, "I believe this great ignorance might be a help to the evangelization of England: any amount of theology can now be smuggled into people's minds under cover of romance without their knowing it" (*Letters* 9 July [August] 1939, 322). Lewis believed in the importance of the imaginative appeal for drawing people to belief in

Christianity. He describes his own imagination's rehabilitation as a baptism, which he credits to George MacDonald's novel *Phantastes* (*George MacDonald* 34) and which preceded his conversion by many years (*Surprised* 181). The imagination plays several roles in human knowing. "Smuggling in" the message of Christianity may be one such role, but there are others, some of which are negative.

In chapter four the reader learned that imagination can obscure true knowing, that false images can lead away from truth and may be the weapons of demonic delusion. Also learned were two significant points about imagination and faith: 1) that the battle for faith, if often fought in the realm of reason, is fought more often in sight and imagination, and, 2) that reason without a faith strengthened in the imagination can conclude in error. Faith, Lewis writes, is not going to be attacked primarily by reason: "It is your senses and your imagination that are going to attack belief. Here, as in the New Testament, the conflict is not between faith and reason but between faith and sight. [ . . . ] Our faith in Christ wavers not so much when real arguments come against it as when it *looks* improbable . . ." ("Religion: Reality or Substitute?" 43). Lewis associates faith with imagination in "Transposition," when he says of a difficult faith issue that "We must believe–and therefore in some degree imagine" the issue's truth (67). In her essay entitled "'. . . And Telling you a Story': A Note on *The Divine Comedy*," Dorothy Sayers's definition of faith matches Lewis's understanding and states the relationship between faith and imagination well: "Faith is imagination actualized by will . . ." (32). In other words, faith is the choice to see via the imagination what *appearances* do not show.

III. Reason and Imagination in Synergy

> It seems to me that imagining is something other than having mental images. When I am imagining (say, Hamlet on the battlements or Herackles' journey to the Hyperboreans) there are images in my mind. They come and go rapidly and assist what I regard as the real imagining only if I take them all as provisional makeshifts, each to be dropped as soon as it has served its (instantaneous) turn. If any one of them becomes static and grows too clear and full, imagination proper is inhibited. A too lively visual imagination is the reader's, and writer's bane [ . . . . ] Again, thinking seems to me something other than the succession of linked concepts which we use when we successfully offer our 'thought' to another in argument. That appears to me to be always a sort of translation of a prior activity: and it was the prior activity which alone enabled us to find these concepts and links. (Lewis "Language" 138-39)

Lewis claims imagination is more than just images occurring in the brain, and reason touches the human mind but goes on apart from it. It is important for Lewis that the reader understand the processes going on in human thinking as more than chemical reactions in an (albeit highly evolved) animal brain. He says, "There seem to be people about to whom imagination means only the presence of mental images [ . . . and] to whom thought means only unuttered speech . . ." (140). Lewis rejects this view wholeheartedly. He believes that reason and imagination work together to bring to the knower insight into the real.

As we look at how reason and imagination function together to make knowing, we will pursue two significant issues: The first is whether or not Lewis's post-conversion view of imagination changed. More importantly, though, is *the* epistemological question of Lewis criticism: did Lewis believe that the imagination could know truth? We have already read of the bifurcated Lewis of the twenties who was struggling to find a reconciliation for reason and imagination. An entry from his diary provides a reminder of that struggle:

> Was thinking about imagination and intellect and the unholy muddle I am in about them at present: undigested scraps of anthroposophy and psychoanalysis jostling with orthodox idealism over a background of good old Kirkian rationalism. Lord what a mess! And all the time (with me) there's the danger of falling back into most childish superstitions, or of running into dogmatic materialism to escape them. [ . . . ] I suddenly found myself thinking "What I won't give up is the doctrine that what we get in imagination at its highest is real in some way, tho, at this stage one can't say how": and then my intellectual conscience smote me for having got to that last pitch of sentimentality–asserting what "I won't do" when I ought to be enquiring what I can know. (*All My Roads Before Me* 18 January 1927, 431-32)

At this time Lewis wanted to believe that imagination grasped reality, but his reason could not provide the basis for that belief. But as Lewis moved further away from the years of his idealism, he came closer to understanding that the ideal world for which his

imagination longed and the real world which reason demanded were not so far apart.

To understand Lewis's view of reason and imagination as having epistemological purpose first requires the recognition that we reason and imagine *about* something. Especially in the context of epistemology, we must remember that reason and imagination are tools we use to help us know *reality*. This third element of epistemological study cannot be ignored. Secondly, understanding reason and imagination requires an understanding of Lewis's view of reality as multi-leveled. Reason operates differently at the different levels of reality, as does imagination, and epistemological questions–such as whether or not Lewis believed the imagination can know truth–can only be answered in the context of his view of reality.

Austin Farrer argues that one of Lewis's most exceptional qualities was his ability to fuse reason and imagination into a coherent method of knowing:

> Someone wrote to me yesterday that Lewis was a split personality because the imaginative and the rationalistic held so curious a balance in his mind; and he himself tells us how his imaginative development raced away in boyhood and was afterward called to order by logic. Yet I will not call a split personality one brave enough both to think and to feel, nor will I call it integration, which is achieved by halving human nature. Certainly reason struggled in him with feeling and sometimes produced bizarre effects; but no one who conversed with him and listened to the flow of that marvelous speech could wish to talk of a split between powers so fruitfully and so mutually engaged. [ . . . ]

> It was this feeling intellect, this intellectual imagination that made the strength of his religious writings. Some of those unsympathetic to his convictions saw him as an advocate who bluffed a public eager to be deceived by the presentation of uncertain arguments as cogent demonstrations. Certainly he was a debater and thought it fair to make the best of his case; and there were those who were reassured by seeing that the case could be made. But his real power was not proof; it was depiction. There lived in his writings a Christian universe that could be both thought and felt, in which he was at home and in which he made his reader at home. (243)

Farrer understands that the key to Lewis's persuasive power is in his ability to combine reason and imagination. Lewis affects his reader using an imagination that is rigorously informed by his intellectual beliefs, and he is effective because his imaginative depictions inspire the reader to think and feel deeply about the reality being communicated.

As for what Lewis says about reason and imagination, note the caution he makes: Lewis says that both reason and imagination can be dangerous and draw one away from knowledge of the real. It is not that they are dangerous apart from each other; rather, it is that they are dangerous if pursued autonomously, divorced from God. In the passage from *Pilgrim's Regress* that follows, the "rules" represent the moral law apprehended by reason, the "pictures" are myths given to the imagination, "Mother Kirk" is Christianity, and the "Landlord's Son" is Christ:

> The pictures alone are dangerous, and the Rules alone are

> dangerous. That is why the best thing of all is to find Mother Kirk at the very beginning [ . . . . ] That, I say, is the best: never to have known the quarrel between the rules and the pictures. But it very rarely happens. The Enemy's agents are everywhere at work, spreading illiteracy in one district blinding men to the pictures in another. Even where Mother Kirk is nominally the ruler men can grow old without knowing how to read the Rules. Her empire is always crumbling. But it never quite crumbles: for as often as men become Pagans again, the Landlord again sends them pictures and stirs up sweet desire and so leads them back to Mother Kirk even as he led the actual Pagans long ago. (147)

Thus reason and imagination have their limitations. The safest route to true knowing is to find Christianity early in life.

Lewis envisions a model for the functioning of reason and imagination in *The Screwtape Letters*. Screwtape tells Wormwood to "[t]hink of your man as a series of concentric circles, his will being innermost, his intellect coming next, and finally his fantasy" (31). The elder demon urges the novice to push virtues to the outer rim where the subject will imagine himself virtuous while having no real virtuous habits enacted by his will. Lewis sees the dangers of imagination here, but elsewhere he sets those off against the limitations of reason.

In chapter ten of *Miracles*, Lewis labels three relationships of knowing in the reason/imagination dynamic:

> (1) That thought is distinct from the imagination which accompanies it. (2)

> That thought may be in the main sound even when the false images that accompany it are mistaken by the thinker for true ones. (3) That anyone who talks about things that cannot be seen, or touched, or heard, or the like, must inevitably talk as if they could be seen or touched or heard . . . . (97-98)

Reason is not imagination. Sometimes, imagination can apprehend images that correspond with reality at the same time that reason knows correctly. Things that cannot be seen (like ideas) must frequently be talked about by imaginative means. In *Miracles* Lewis emphasizes reason as a corrective for failed attempts to imagine the real, though he still points out a limitation in reason for which imagination must compensate.

Lewis takes up this latter point in his essay "The Language of Religion":

> Christians believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God [ . . . . ] Now of course the statement cannot mean that He stands to God in the very same physical and temporal relation which exists between offspring and male parent in the animal world. It is then a poetical statement. And such expression must here be necessary because the reality He spoke of is outside our experience. And here once more the religious and the theological procedure diverge. The theologian will describe it as 'analogical', drawing our minds at once away from the subtle and sensitive exploitations of imagination and emotion with which poetry works to the clear-cut but clumsy analogies of the lecture-room. He will even explain in what respects the father-son relationship is *not* analogical to the reality,

> hoping by elimination to reach the respects in which it is. He may even supply other analogies of his own–the lamp and the light which flows from it, or the like. It is all unavoidable and necessary for certain purposes. But there is some death in it. The sentence 'Jesus Christ is the Son of God' cannot be all got into the form 'There is between Jesus and God an asymmetrical, social harmonious relation involving homogeneity.' (137)

Clearly some ideas can be understood only when translated into forms, into images. Otherwise they become too abstract for comprehension. In order for one to come to any understanding of God, as this example shows, reason and imagination must operate together.

Some knowing can only be obtained through imaginative means, where reason is present but plays a subordinate role. Thus in the Oedipus story we have "set before our imagination something that has always baffled the intellect: we have *seen* how destiny and free will can be combined, even how free will is the *modus operandi* of destiny" ("On Stories" 15). On the other hand, some ideas controlled by imagination are in need of correction by reason:

> I once heard a lady tell her daughter that if you ate too many aspirin tablets you would die. 'But why?' asked the child. 'If you squash them you don't find any horrid red things inside them.' Obviously, when this child thought of poison she not only had an attendant image of 'horrid red things', but she actually believed that poison was red. And this is an error. ("Horrid Red Things" 70)

In the end, Lewis argues that reason and imagination, each having its dangers, must constantly correct each other (*Letters to Malcolm* 21-22).

Finally, Lewis would remind us that there are limitations to both reason and imagination, and he does this throughout his works, from *The Pilgrim's Regress* in the early 1930s to *Letters to Malcolm*, published shortly before his death. As Payne explains it, "There are diabolical as well as divine elements in the art of our mythmakers and in the dialectic of our finest logicians, because our capacities to reason and to imagine are fallen" (156). Above this, however, is the limitation of our finite selves. The "highest spiritual realities" cannot be "picturable, or even explicable in terms of our abstract thought" (*Problem* 86).

IV. Did Lewis's View of Imagination Change?

Lewis's conversion was the major turning point in his life. It is Peter Schakel's contention that "another turning point of major significance occurred in the 1940s. It is a change evidenced by a lessening of the strong reliance on reason which had come to mark his thinking in the mid-forties, and a much greater use of and confidence in the imagination than before" (*Reason and Imagination* 148). Earlier Schakel describes this change as one in attitude and practice on Lewis's part (x). A brief review of Schakel's key arguments indicates that such is the case; however, one should also ask whether or not a change in attitude and practice on Lewis's part also constitutes a change in his intellectual position, his epistemology.

Schakel attributes Lewis's reduced confidence in reason to a "particular time and place" (148):

Eight months after the publication of *Miracles*, its methods were challenged in a public debate by G. E. M. Anscombe, then already a well-known and impressive philosopher–and a Catholic. At a meeting of the Socratic Club in Oxford on 2 February 1948, Miss Anscombe attacked the methods of the crucial third chapter of the book. In the mode of analytic philosophy, she focused on what she called Lewis's imprecision or confusion in his use of the key terms in his argument: "I am going to argue that your whole thesis is only specious because of the ambiguity of the words 'why,' 'because,' and 'explanation.'" [ . . . ]

The adequacy and effectiveness of Miss Anscombe's attack are still being discussed. But the issue of whether Miss Anscombe "won" the debate seems less important than the effect the encounter had on Lewis. According to his friends, Lewis felt depressed and defeated: Derek Brewer reports that Lewis's talk, at lunch in a pub a few days after the meeting, "was all of the fog of war the retreat of infantry thrown back under heavy attack." [ . . . ] Clearly the encounter with Miss Anscombe did not shatter his belief in reason: he in no way repudiated the apologetic works and, later, revised the third chapter of *Miracles* to avoid the difficulties Miss Anscombe had pointed out. Equally clearly, however, there is a movement away from apologetics after the forties which, combined with his broadened approach to myth, suggests that Lewis has reassessed his earlier heavy reliance upon reason.[1] (148-49)

Can one ascribe to Lewis's encounter with Anscombe the significant effect on his confidence in reason that Schakel suggests? The testimony of Derek Brewer, to which Schakel refers, occurs in his "The Tutor: A Portrait" in Como's *Lewis at the Breakfast Table*. Brewer quotes from his diary regarding dinner with Lewis two days after the debate: "None of us at first very cheerful–one has to work hard to keep up with Lewis. He was obviously disturbed by his encounter last Monday with Miss Anscombe . . ." (Brewer 59). In his 1988 biography of Lewis, George Sayer claims Lewis "told me that he had been proved wrong, that his argument for the existence of God had been demolished" (307). Anscombe's reply, when told of Lewis's statement, was that she "had no idea that he took it so seriously. As a matter of fact I don't think I agree that I won" (307). Sayer says the "debate had been a humiliating experience, but perhaps it was ultimately good for him. In the past, he had been far too proud of his logical ability. Now he was humbled" (308). Writing of the debate for the *Readers' Encyclopedia*, Katherine Harper says, "Hugo Dyson and George Sayer have claimed that Lewis was humiliated by his public defeat and resentful of his opponent; Professor Anscombe has disagreed, noting that she and he dined together with Humphrey Havard only a few weeks later" (81). The evidence here presented leads to no absolute conclusion; however, those who were close friends with Lewis (like Dyson and Sayer) believe the debate had a definite effect on him.

Lewis wrote no more serious apologetic works after the forties. In his article on "Reason," Schakel suggests that Lewis may have stopped writing rational apologetics because of the Anscombe debate. But he also acknowledges that "it may equally derive

from a sense that he had accomplished what he wanted to in reasoned apologetics and was ready to experiment with other modes of writing" (350). Perhaps both factors play a part. One can add to the latter point (as argued in this study) that Lewis's most rational based apologetical works were created during a period of intense focus on the nature of reality and on its epistemological implications. Perhaps with the writing of *Miracles*, Lewis had said all he wanted to in apologetics.

As a sign of an increasing confidence in imagination, Schakel points to Lewis's "expanded conception of myth" (*Reason and Imagination* 149). Chapter four covered the inconsistency between Lewis's view of myth as "truth" in *Pilgrim's Regress* and as "reality" in "Myth Became Fact." There it was argued that a clarification in Lewis's view of myth had to do with a concern for delineating a hierarchical and sacramental view of reality and its epistemological implications. Taken with Schakel's other evidence, Lewis's expanded view of myth may indicate an increasing confidence in imagination; however, as was shown in chapter four, Lewis's focusing on the epistemological implications of reality explains an "expanded conception of myth" as well.

Schakel's major argument for a change in Lewis's attitude toward imagination is chronological. Lewis's earliest post-conversion works are dominated by reason, but through the years his works come to rely more and more on imagination (*Reason and Imagination* x). A brief overview of Lewis's fiction alone suggests such a pattern: though *The Pilgrim's Regress* is imaginative, it is also highly derivative (from Bunyan); as allegory it is also highly didactic and discursive. The space trilogy is also imaginative, but it is also filled with philosophical speculations and dialogue. This is true even of

*Perelandra* with its highly imaginative world. But, as Schakel points out, "even here Lewis is not content to leave the imaginative unaided by the conceptual. The heart of the book–not the most memorable aspect, but the dominant part in terms of length and placement–is an extended philosophical-theological discussion between the unfallen queen of the planet, Weston [ . . . ] and Ransom . . ." (*Reason and Imagination* 139-40). *Screwtape* and *Divorce* both work in the same way: employing imagination but relying on reason (philosophy). In the latter, for example, there is an extended discussion between MacDonald and Lewis on fate and free will (124-27). The Narnia books and *Till We Have Faces* (all written in the fifties), while having some philosophical passages, rely most heavily on the imagination. The Narnian tales have little didacticism, little philosophical speculation. And in *Till We Have Faces*, imagination is championed over reason (the Fox turns out to be wrong!), myth is more right than philosophy, and image is closer to truth than idea (see, for example, the Fox's defense of Orual in the underworld 294-96).

Schakel never argues that Lewis's post-conversion ideas about reason and imagination changed. He does argue, however, for a "shift, not in basic positions or theory but certainly in emphasis and practice" in the forties and fifties (x). But does this shift also indicate a change in Lewis's philosophical thinking about reason and imagination? Chapter two covered and rejected the question of a fourth Lewis-of-fact, a Lewis who doubted the human ability to know. Though some of Lewis's later writings take on a more subjective tone, passages from his corpus both early and late suggest both confidence and caution in the human ability to know. The same is true of passages that

reveal Lewis's epistemological position on imagination. If Lewis's confidence toward the imagination changed, his intellectual framework did not. For example, numerous passages, including texts written in the fifties and sixties, show Lewis's epistemological caution in regard to imagination. Many of these passages were quoted in chapter four.[2] To these one can add the following cautions about imagination from later Lewis writings: "Images, whether on paper or in the mind, are not important for themselves. Merely links . . ." (*A Grief Observed* 77); "If the imagination were obedient, the appetites would give us very little trouble" (*Letters to Malcolm* 17); and finally, on the problem of Christ's manhood and Divinity:

> For a God who can be ignorant is less baffling than a God who falsely professes ignorance. The answer of theologians is that the God-Man was omniscient as God, and ignorant as Man. This, no doubt, is true, though it cannot be imagined. Nor indeed can the unconsciousness of Christ in sleep be imagined, nor the twilight of reason in his infancy; still less his merely organic life in his mother's womb. But the physical sciences, no less than theology, propose for our belief much that cannot be imagined. ("The World's Last Night" 99)

Other passages, quoted in the previous sub-section, indicate Lewis's confidence in and caution toward *both* reason and imagination in the epistemological process.[3]

Throughout his post-conversion writings, Lewis believed in and understood the limitations of the human ability to know. And he believed in the importance and limitations of both reason and imagination in that process. Thus, though there was a

change in Lewis's practice and attitude toward reason and imagination, his intellectual position on these two modes of knowing remained consistent throughout his post-conversion life.

V. Barfield and the "Great War"

By exploring Lewis's "Great War" with Owen Barfield, one can learn new information about the relationship between reason and imagination in Lewis's thinking, and this information helps to answer the question of whether or not Lewis ever believed the imagination to be a faculty capable of apprehending truth. Barfield's answer is to say that Lewis never believed in imaginative truth either before or after his conversion. However, Barfield did influence Lewis as to the significance of metaphor in epistemology, and understanding this influence will facilitate the drawing of final conclusions about imagination, truth, and Lewis's epistemology. Though Barfield does not believe Lewis's views on imagination changed, he does believe in some sort of change in Lewis's thinking (*Barfield on Lewis* 106-07).

Barfield converted to the Anthroposophy of Rudolph Steiner in 1923 (Bramlett 188).[4] According to Lewis, this moment

> marked the beginning of what I can only describe as the Great War between him and me. It was never, thank God, a quarrel, though it could have become one in a moment if he had used to me anything like the violence I allowed myself to him. But it was an almost incessant disputation, sometimes by letter and sometimes face to face, which lasted for years. And this Great War was one of the turning points of my life.

(*Surprised* 207)

The impact of the "Great War," according to Lewis, was first to rid him of "'chronological snobbery,' the uncritical acceptance of the intellectual climate common to our own age and the assumption that whatever has gone out of date is on that account discredited" (207). Lewis also says that Barfield convinced him that any theory of knowledge based on a purely "realistic" view of the universe (where reality is defined as the universe perceived by the senses) could not account for reasoned truth, valid moral judgments, or a philosophy of aesthetics (208). The logical conclusion of such a "realistic" view would be to hold knowledge as invalid or accept or adopt some form of behaviorism. Lewis would accept neither option, so he had to admit that human "logic was participation in a cosmic *Logos*" (209). This was not the moment of his conversion, but it was a step down that road. The "Great War" was ended, then, by the time of Lewis's conversion, around 1931 (Bramlett 188).

Discussing the content of the "Great War" is facilitated by turning to a little war between critics Lionel Adey and Stephen Thorson, who did the first scholarly work on this part of Lewis's intellectual life. Adey's first study of the "Great War" appeared in 1975:

> At first it was difficult to make out what the dozen or so letters and half-dozen tractates were about or why they had played so vital a role in the development of two distinguished minds. The letters bore no dates, were in no obvious order and were plainly incomplete. Some by Lewis were illustrated by comic sketches, while one of Barfield's included a

> more serious geometrical illustration. Mr. Barfield explained that most of them concerned his B. Litt. Thesis "Poetic Diction", published under that title in 1928. The letters fell into a larger group dealing with the main themes of Poetic Diction and a smaller one expressing Lewis's disapproval of the doctrines of Anthoposophy. A rough order became evident within each group and inferences could reasonably be made about the substance of missing items.
>
> The "Great War" letters, ranging from a page up to sixteen pages, deal basically with two issues. One is whether, as Barfield asserts, imagination conveys truth or whether, as Lewis maintains, it merely shows what difference a given statement might make if true, without establishing its truth or falsehood, which depend on rational judgment. The other issue is the nature of metaphor, which Barfield sees as expressing a relationship perceived by a flash of intuition on the poet's part. Lewis thought his friend had made too much of metaphor, which he saw as a device for conveying "real wealth," a concrete mental picture, rather than the "paper money" of abstract terms. Rather amusingly, he compares "The Lord is my shepherd" with "The Deity exercises a beneficent superintendence." ("The Barfield–Lewis 'Great War'" 10)

Regarding the specific issue of imaginative truth Adey summarizes that Barfield saw imagination as the "means by which reality 'became' in the mind," but Lewis insisted that "imagining a given entity, e. g. an angel, showed not whether it existed but what quality

or appearance it would have if it did" (11). Adey's monograph treatment of the "Great War" followed in 1978. His reading of the texts is thorough (though too extensive for this limited space), but, as Thorson shows, misses the point that makes Lewis's views on imagination relevant to this study.

Thorson, using the same unpublished source material as Adey, concludes that Adey makes two major mistakes:

> First, they have not understood *how* Lewis's epistemology *changed* after his conversion. This is due to their second error. *They argue with Lewis's epistemology without considering the metaphysics it was based upon*. That is, they argue "how we know" without noting Lewis's view of "what we are". This is especially crucial in Lewis's case, because the metaphysical base for his epistemology was remarkably different after he became a Christian. ("Knowing and Being" 1)

Thus, before looking at Lewis's epistemology in the "Great War" he focuses on Lewis's metaphysics which, though he did not become an Anthroposophist, was similar to Barfield's. Lewis argued for multiple realities during the "Great War" (but not in the sense he would later as a Christian). He believed in an external physical world (eventually), but in a more significant world of "Spirit" which is the world of thought or mind. He posited the individual thinker as a "soul" that emerges from Spirit and eventually recedes back into it. "Body," the individual soul's and the entire physical world, is also an emantion of Spirit (2-3). Epistemologically, then, during the time of the "Great War," knowing was an issue of soul finding a way to connect back to Spirit from

which it emanated, "a reawakening consciousness of participation in Spirit" (4), and this theory was true for both Barfield and Lewis.

The "cornerstone" of Lewis's theory of knowledge at this time was Alexander's distinction in *Space, Time, and Deity* between "Enjoyment" (or experiencing) and "Contemplation" (or thinking) (Thorson "Knowing and Being" 3). Applied to their (Lewis and Barfield's) cosmology, this concept allowed Lewis to conclude the following about knowing:

> "The Spirit is pure subject and can only be enjoyed, never contemplated." [ . . . S]ouls can only "contemplate" each other, not "enjoy" each other, except by relapsing into Spirit and ceasing to be souls. Lewis felt this provided a way to refute the claims of Anthroposophy, and of Barfield's view of poetic imagination as a way to true knowledge. (3)

Lewis believed we could enjoy or experience Spirit through imagination, even calling it "the activity of discerning as Spirit" or "the point of view of Spirit" (5). But since we cannot contemplate as well as enjoy by imagination, we cannot verify true existences by it. Thorson summarizes Lewis's "Great War" epistemology to this point:

> 1. The soul emerges from Spirit, of which it is a part.
>
> 2. We cannot both enjoy and contemplate at the same time, for the Spirit *is* the contemplating self and the soul *is* the enjoying self.
>
> 3. But we can, by Imagination, "see all things as Spirit sees," and "will all things as Spirit wills," and we should do so.
>
> 4. However, since we cannot both enjoy Imagination and contemplate

whether it is true at the same time, knowledge of truth must be objectively demonstrated.

5. Therefore, we cannot get truth by Imagination. (6)

Barfield's reply, however, was that, if imagination was seeing as Spirit sees, then the soul must participate in some level of ascension back toward Spirit while yet remaining soul, allowing us to both enjoy and contemplate. Barfield called this state "con-enjoyment" (5). Thorson summarizes Barfield thus:

1. Viewing all things as Spirit in their context *must* mean ascending from contemplation to "con-enjoyment," moving in consciousness back toward Spirit while remaining soul.

2. This must mean we see Truth, or what else could "seeing as Spirit sees" mean?

3. In other words, since Lewis's points #1 and #3 contradict point #2, point #2 is wrong. Enjoyment and contemplation are *not* mutually exclusive.

4. Therefore, we *do* get truth and knowledge from Imagination. (6)

Thorson concludes that Barfield was absolutely right. Within the system of reality in which he and Lewis had been battling, Barfield's epistemology was more consistent, though Lewis may not have understood this. Lewis did try to answer Barfield, but, Thorson says, one need go no further because "Lewis eventually *got out of the system*" (6).

In other words, in the cosmos that Barfield believed in (as did Lewis before his conversion), imagination *must* be a truth-bearing faculty. Lewis's failure to believe so

was inconsistent with the system of reality under which he was operating. This was not a problem, though, says Thorson, because when Lewis became a Christian he gave up Barfield's view of reality for one that was Creational and Incarnational:

> Lewis eventually accepted Christianity with its doctrine of the Incarnation. Understood correctly, these two concepts, Creation and Incarnation, were the basis for a whole new approach to metaphysics. They cut Lewis off from his view during the "Great War". They also cut him off from Anthroposophy.
>
> In a letter in 1942 to A. C. Harwood, an Anthroposophical friend, Lewis said, "I think the real difference between us is on a more general topic. [ . . . ] I don't think that a conception of *creatureliness* is a part of your philosophy at all, and your system is anthropocentric. That's the real 'great divide'." (Thorson "Knowing and Being" 6-7)

Thorson's point is a most significant contribution to a Lewisian epistemology. One cannot understand Lewis's theory of knowing by focusing on reason and imagination (or even truths and myth) alone. A third element, reality (or fact) must inform and be the grounding point for understanding the others. Thorson is additionally saying that Lewis's theory of imagination prior to his conversion is only of little concern in understanding his final epistemology.

Thorson says that, after his conversion, Lewis's "metaphysics" or view of reality was as follows:

> First, Lewis came to believe in a true doctrine of Creation, whereby

> God is outside of, and man a part of, that creation. Thus man is completely "other" than God; man is not a part of nor emerging from God, but is an "image" of God. Second, Lewis describes this created world as having both a Nature and a Supernature within it, and further describes Nature as containing both a material and an immaterial part. Elements or beings found in all three "worlds" may be good or evil.
>
> Third, Lewis considered man a tripartite being, sharing in all three worlds through a spirit, soul and body. As neither our Reason nor our moral sense of "ought" can be explained from within Nature, they must not be a part of Nature, but a part of Supernature. Man has these because he is a spirit, and participates in Supernature via his spirit. Man is also a soul, a psychological being with emotions, passions, memory, and imagination, and man is also a body, of course, participating in the physical world. (7)

The implications of this cosmology on his epistemology are several. Lewis's Spirit (with a capital "S") was now separated from man who was now completely *other* than God. Man had a spirit (little "s"), soul, and body, and imagination was now no longer spiritual, but "psychological," that is, part of the soul.

Thus far, this focus on Lewis and Barfield yields the following conclusions about imagination and reason: the "Great War" letters reveal nothing of Lewis's post-conversion philosophy of reason and imagination because Lewis's view of reality at the time of the war was very different from his view after his conversion. In other words,

what Lewis had to say prior to his conversion about reason and imagination belongs to a different person (the "old" C. S. Lewis) than what he had to say after his conversion (the "new" C. S. Lewis). Moreover, prior to his conversion, Lewis did not believe the imagination to be a truth-apprehending faculty, but what about after his conversion?

Only a single passage ever suggests that Lewis might have believed in a truth-bearing imagination. Having read his "Personal Heresy" essay, T. S. Eliot asked Lewis if he were going to write more essays dealing with similar issues. According to Green and Hooper,

> Lewis said in a letter of 2 June 1931: 'The essay does, as you have divined, form the first of a series of which I have all the materials to hand. The others would be 2. Objective Standards of Literary Merit. 3. Literature and Virtue (This is not a stylistic variant of "Art and Morality": that is my whole point). 4. Literature and Knowledge. 5. Metaphor and Truth. The whole, when completed, would form a frontal attack on Crocean aesthetics and state a neo-Aristotelian theory of literature (not of Art, about which I say nothing) which *inter alia* will re-affirm the romantic doctrine of imagination as a truth-bearing faculty, though not quite as the romantics understood it.' (126)

Now what is to be made of this? At one time in his life Lewis affirmed the imagination as a truth-bearing (truth-apprehending) faculty. He never wrote any of these essays, so all Lewis criticism currently has is this fragment of a letter with an unexplained claim. On the evidence of the "Great War" material presented so far, we can conclude the following:

Lewis's letter to Eliot was written in June of 1931. He wrote of his conversion to Arthur Greeves on October first. Perhaps Barfield had almost convinced him that under the old cosmology imagination was the means for knowing truth, and he (Lewis) was going to apply some version of the principle to literary theory. And perhaps he never wrote the essays because his cosmology and, therefore, his view of imagination changed after his conversion.

One can supplement Thorson's reading of the "Great War" with a single addition. Barfield significantly helped change Lewis's view of metaphor (and this also bears on the issue of imagination). Barfield's theory of metaphor was discussed alongside Lewis's theory of myth in chapter four. Critics agree on the influence: "It is clear that during his early years he [Lewis] learned from Barfield to attach real epistemological significance to metaphoric, allegorical, and symbolic language . . ." (Morris and Wendling 152); Lewis came to the realization of "having under-estimated the importance [of metaphor]. In so far as metaphor brings before the mind images or representations of objects, metaphor, he agrees, gives life to abstractions otherwise lifeless" (Adey *C. S. Lewis's "Great War"* 34). Regarding "the idea of imagination as the 'organ of meaning,' Lewis owes much to Owen Barfield" (Honda 28). To this statement Duriez adds that Barfield's *Poetic Diction* could be influential on Lewis despite his rejection of Anthroposophy, because the book requires "no commitment to anthroposophical interpretations of Christianity" ("In the Library" 367*n*.). One of the most significant effects Barfield had on Lewis was to help him see that figurative language plays an important epistemological role. Lewis's own conclusions about that role must now be considered.

## VI. Figurative Language: Analogy, Symbol, Allegory, Metaphor and First Steps Toward Conclusions on Meaning

This section takes up terms that come under the umbrella of imagination and that are normally associated with imaginative literature. The goal here is to understand a variety of concepts which have been touched on throughout this study as integral concepts in Lewis's epistemology. The reader's understanding of Lewis on imagination will be more complete and this understanding will lay a foundation for drawing conclusions on the nature of meaning in the next sub-section. It should be noted that, although Lewis made distinctions among the terms, he frequently used some of them synonymously (the terms "figurative," "analogy," "symbol," and "metaphor" are often interchangeable in his writings). Lyle H. Smith cautions us about Lewis on metaphor:

> C. S. Lewis, himself a skillful user of metaphor, wrote about metaphor occasionally. His thoughts on the subject are always provocative, but also almost always "by the way"–he needs to talk about metaphor for a moment so that he can talk about something else more clearly. When he does talk about metaphor, he is concerned with what it does, rather than with how it works. If we read Lewis for a clearly articulated theory of metaphor [ . . . ] we shall not find it. ("C. S. Lewis" 11)

Lewis wrote of metaphor in "Bluspels and Flalansferes," and of allegory in *The Allegory of Love*, but he did not write a complete literary theory, so the conclusions drawn here are assembled from musings throughout a variety of works.

Lewis uses "Analogy" sparingly and broadly sometimes encompassing the terms

"symbol" and "metaphor." Analogy is typically the joining of ideas with images (i. e. illustration) so that reason and imagination can work together to enhance knowing. An example occurs in *The Problem of Pain*: Lewis describes God's ontological relationship with mankind and concludes, "Such a unique relation can be apprehended only by analogies: from the various types of love known among creatures we reach an inadequate, but useful, conception of God's love for man" (42).

The dichotomy analogy attempts to bridge is that between the literal and the figurative. Sometimes Lewis phrases language in terms of "literal" versus "symbolic" or "literal" versus "metaphorical." Confusion may result because Lewis also uses the terms "symbol" and "metaphor" each in specific ways (see below). Consider first the idea of the literal versus the figurative. Lewis ties analogy to these two terms in *Letters to Malcolm*:

> We are constantly represented as exciting the Divine wrath or pity–even as "grieving" God. I know this language is analogical. But when we say that, we must not smuggle in the idea that we can throw the analogy away and, as it were, get in behind it to a purely literal truth. All we can really substitute for the analogical expression is some theological abstraction. And the abstraction's value is almost entirely negative. It warns us against drawing absurd consequences from the analogical expression by prosaic extrapolations. By itself, the abstraction "impassible" can get us nowhere. It might even suggest something far more misleading than the most *naif* Old Testament picture of a stormily

> emotional Jehovah. Either something inert, or something which was "Pure Act" in such a sense that it could take no account of events within the universe it had created.
>
> I suggest two rules for exegetics: 1) Never take the images literally. 2) When the *purport* of the images–what they say to our fear and hope and will and affections–seems to conflict with the theological abstractions, trust the purport of the images every time. For our abstract thinking is itself a tissue of analogies: a continual modeling of spiritual reality in legal or chemical or mechanical terms. (*Malcolm* 51-52)

When talking about God, analogical or figurative language is all we can use. If we attempt to substitute literal language we are, in fact, only substituting theological abstractions and abstractions are themselves weaker analogies, but we have forgotten that Lewis suggests a two-part interpretive strategy: in the first place we should not take images as literal, and in the second place we should trust images over theological abstractions that attempt to convert them into literals with the result of robbing them of their emotional content.

An earlier sub-section showed the danger of inaccuracy that can accompany images, but it additionally noted Lewis's claim that "anyone who talks about things that cannot be seen [ . . . ] must inevitably talk as if they could be . . ." (*Miracles* 98). Also seen earlier was an example of the danger of abstracting, which is similar to the *Malcolm* passage above: "'Jesus Christ is the Son of God' cannot be all got into the form 'There is between Jesus and God an asymmetrical, social harmonious relation involving

homogeneity" ("The Language of Religion" 137). Lewis continues:

> Now it seems to me a mistake to think that our experience in general can be communicated by precise and literal language and that there is a special class of experiences (say, emotions) which cannot. The truth seems to me the opposite: there is a special region of experiences which can be communicated *without* Poetic language, namely, its 'common measurable features', but most experience cannot. To be incommunicable by Scientific language is, so far as I can judge, the normal state of experience. (138)

Return now to double meanings for the terms "symbol" and "metaphor." Lewis applies very specific definitions to "metaphor" and "symbolism." Sometimes, however, he uses these terms generally, as synonyms for analogy or all figurative language. When he so uses the terms, it is in the context of the literal versus the figurative (Lewis's more specific uses of symbol and metaphor will be reviewed shortly). An example of such usage exists in *Miracles*, where Lewis freely contrasts "literalism" (207) with "symbolism" (208) and also "the literal and the metaphorical" (211).

In this significant *Miracles* passage, though (207-12), there is more going on. So far we have seen that symbol and metaphor each have a generic definition of "figurative" (as opposed to literal). However, as seen in chapter two of this study, whether using the term "symbol" or "metaphor," Lewis sometimes means that figurative language, when used to describe higher levels of reality, may in some way be literal, that there is a mode of being where, like myth, symbol and metaphor become fact (*Miracles* 208 and 212).

One of Lewis's most complete statements of this idea is found in his essay "Modern Theology and Biblical Criticism," which is of a response to a 1909 article by George Tyrrell in which Tyrrell rejects the account of a literal ascension because heaven is not to be found in the sky. Lewis summarizes Tyrell: "As man progresses he revolts against 'earlier and inadequate expressions of the religious idea . . . Taken literally, and not symbolically, they do not meet his need'" ("Modern Theology" 164). Lewis then responds:

> It might still be true that 'taken literally and not symbolically' they are inadequate. From which the conclusion commonly drawn is that they must be taken symbolically, not literally; that is, wholly symbolically. [ . . . ]
>
> But surely there is a flaw here. The argument runs like this. All the details are derived from our present experience; but the reality transcends our experience: therefore all the details are wholly and equally symbolical. But suppose a dog were trying to form a conception of human life. All the details in its picture would be derived from canine experience. Therefore all that the dog imagined could, at best, be only analogically true of human life. The conclusion is false. If the dog visualized our scientific researches in terms of ratting, this would be analogical; but if it thought that eating could be predicated of humans only in an analogical sense, the dog would be wrong. In fact if a dog could, *per impossible*, be plunged for a day into human life, it would be hardly more surprised by hitherto

> unimagined differences than by hitherto unsuspected similarities. [ . . . ]
>
> But the dog can't get into human life. Consequently, though it can be sure that its best ideas of human life are full of analogy and symbol, it could never point to any one detail and say, 'this is entirely symbolic.' [ . . . ] When I know as I am known I shall be able to tell which parts of the story were purely symbolical and which, if any, were not [ . . . . ] Had we not better wait? (164-66)

Thus, in the higher reality we may discover that many of our analogies were literal.

"Symbol" and "symbolism" do have specific definitions in Lewis. Kath Filmer records a Lewis statement on symbol from an unpublished letter (25 March 1943) in the Wade Collection, in which Lewis says that symbols "exist precisely for the purpose of conveying to the imagination what the intellect is not ready for" ("Polemic Image" 67). Lewis makes statements about symbolism in two published passages. Unfortunately they appear, partially at least, to contradict each other, presenting a critical conundrum. In *The Allegory of Love*, Lewis writes, "It is of the very nature of thought and language to represent what is immaterial in picturable terms. What is good or happy has always been high like the heavens and bright like the sun" (44). In the next paragraph Lewis says that this "fundamental equivalence between the immaterial and the material may be used by the mind in two ways . . . ." In the first way, we use images to express thoughts and feelings. Thus, if we are torn between anger and gentleness, we might explain our "state of mind by inventing a person called *Ira* with a torch and letting her contend with another invented person called *Patientia*" (45). To do this is to create allegory. But there is

another way to use the equivalence of the material and the immaterial in our minds:

> If our passions, being immaterial, can be copied by material inventions, then it is possible that our material world in its turn is the copy of an invisible world. As the god Amor and his figurative garden are to the actual passions of men, so perhaps we ourselves and our 'real' world are to something else. The attempt to read that something else through its sensible imitations, to see the archetype in the copy, is what I mean by symbolism or sacramentalism. (45)

Here Lewis uses symbolism as more of a philosophical than a literary term. Symbolism, also called sacramentalism, is to look for the heavenly reality in the earthly copy. There is a suggestion that this is something one should do not only in literary endeavors but in looking at life itself. There are two interpretive problems here. One is with Lewis's definition of allegory; a forthcoming examination of allegory raises questions about Lewis's belief in his own definition. The second problem is the contradiction between this passage and one from "Transposition."

In chapter two we learned that, in "Transposition," Lewis observes that the word "symbolism" is not always a sufficient label for the relationship between the higher medium and its transposition into the lower (62-63). Lewis claims that some instances of symbolism are purely representational. Others are transpositional or sacramental: the signified is actually present in the sign itself. Here symbolism is used in two senses: as simple representation, its most basic definition, and as being, in part, literal. This is the definition of "symbol" given under "analogy" above. "Symbol," then, has these two

definitions in Lewis: 1. figurative as *opposed* to literal, or representation, where an object stands by association for another object or idea; 2. the literal-in-the-figurative–the symbol in some way both represents and is the thing it symbolizes (a definition used also of metaphor). But in "Transposition" Lewis decides he would rather call this second usage "sacramental" than "symbolical" (which agrees with the passage in *Allegory* where sacrament and symbolism are synonyms) (63).

How does one explain the different uses of "symbolism" in *The Allegory of Love* and "Transposition"? A first explanation is to say that the discrepancy between *Allegory* (written in the thirties) and "Transposition" (written in the forties) is an accident. As was said at the beginning of this sub-section, Lewis never attempted a systematic literary theory and no author remembers everything he or she wrote.

A second explanation is that, although there is a discrepancy between the two passages, it is not an absolute discrepancy; that is, symbolism and sacramentalism are still associated in the "Transposition" essay, only with a qualification. So perhaps Lewis did remember the distinction he had made in *Allegory* (but this explanation works even if he did not). The difference is that, in *Allegory*, Lewis was writing for a specialized, highly educated audience of scholars. "Transposition" was written as a sermon for a more general, less educated, audience. Perhaps Lewis realized that the average person would think of symbolism as mere representation–where an object stands for an idea (as in his definition of allegory)–so he decided to set the more common word aside and used "sacrament" to convey the more specialized sense. But rather than remove the term "symbol" completely, he divides it into two kinds. In this scenario one can bring the

three terms together in the following model:

```
The sign symbolizes          |                The sign symbolizes
the signified but            |                the signified and
is not the                   |                bears something of
signified.                   |                the signified in its
                             |                very self.
-------------------------------------------- | ------------------------------------------------------------
                             |
Allegory              _______Symbol_______                Sacrament
                      |      |      |
          The relationship   |   The pictures
          between speech     |   of suns and
          and writing.       |   lamps.
```

In *The Allegory of Love*, symbolism and sacramentalism are to the right of the dividing line. In "Transposition," symbolism falls primarily on the left but does occur on the right because Lewis chose to call it sacramentalism for the sake of his general audience.

In *The Allegory of Love*, Lewis defines the act of making allegory: "start with an immaterial fact, such as the passions which you actually experience, and [ . . . ] then invent *invisibilia* to express them" (44-45). In the afterword to *The Pilgrim's Regress* (written in 1943, over a decade after the book was first published), Lewis writes that allegory exists "to make the inner world more palpable by giving it an (imagined) concrete embodiment" (208). And in a letter of 29 December 1958, he says, "By an allegory I mean a composition (whether pictorial or literary) in wh. immaterial realities are represented by feigned physical objects e.g. a pictured Cupid allegorically represents erotic love [ . . . ] or, in Bunyan a giant represents Despair" (*Letters* 475). There is consistency across three decades.

Lewis's major concern about allegory is that it be read properly.

> Allegory gives you one thing in terms of another. All depends on respecting the rights of the vehicle and its freight. The Foolish Virgins, within the parable, do not miss beatitude; they miss a wedding party. [ . . . ] It is extraordinary how often this principle is disregarded. [ . . . It] perhaps comes from the pernicious habit of reading allegory as if it were a cryptogram to be translated; as if, having grasped what an image (as we say) 'means', we threw the image away and thought of the ingredient in real life which it represents. But that method leads you continually out of the book back into the conception you started from and would have had without reading it. The right process is the exact reverse. We ought not to be thinking 'This green valley, where the shepherd boy is singing, represents humility'; we ought to be discovering, as we read, that humility is like that green valley. That way, moving always into the book, not out of it, from the concept to the image, enriches the concept. And that is what allegory is for. ("The Vision of John Bunyan" 148-49)

Michael W. Price summarizes Lewis's concern, saying, "Lewis means readers of allegory must value the story as a story–for its own sake–apart from its allegorical interpretation–or, as Lewis put it in *An Experiment in Criticism*, to 'receive' rather than 'use' it (82-83)" (Price 153).

This being said, there are nevertheless critics who question Lewis's definition of allegory. One of these is Paul Piehler. Calling *The Allegory of Love* the greatest of Lewis's scholarly works, he nevertheless finds a flaw in Lewis's discussion of allegory

and symbolism. Lewis's definition of allegory, Piehler contends, does not match his interpretive statements about it ("Visions and Revisions" 79). Piehler examines the definition:

> Explicitly, for Lewis, the scenes and personages of allegory appear to be no more than rather trivial fancies. "The allegorist leaves the given–his own passions–to talk of that which is confessedly less real, which is a fiction." This contrasts with the symbolist who "leaves the given to find that which is more real." Thus, for Lewis, allegory is by no means to be considered a serious "mode of thought," but merely a "mode of expression" (*Allegory* 45, 48). ("Visions and Revisions" 79)

This contrast is not original to Lewis. Piehler traces its origins in a separate article: "Lewis's sharp theoretical distinction between allegory and symbolism [ . . . ] goes back as far as the critical writings of Coleridge, who doubtless based his views on the relatively trivial allegories of eighteenth-century classicism, as opposed to the new symbolism characteristic of Romantic poetry" ("Myth or Allegory" 201).

The significant point in Piehler's argument, though, is that "Lewis makes no use of this distinction in his actual analysis of medieval allegories" (201). Lewis's statements about specific allegories, in fact, contradict his own theoretical claim:

> At times, indeed, he recognizes quite explicitly that allegory is capable of exploring reality directly, as when he warns us not to think that in turning to *The Romance of the Rose* "we are retreating from the real world into the shadowy world of abstractions" (115). [ . . . ] Talking of the

> decline of allegory in the late fifteenth century, as manifested in the work of the poetaster William Neville, Lewis implicitly reverses his theoretical position once more: "The earlier poets used allegory to explore worlds of new, subtle, and noble feeling, under the guidance of clear and masculine thought: profound realities are always visible while we read them" (255). ("Visions and Revisions" 79-80)

Lewis was able to see beyond this theory in the more excellent works of medieval allegory, and "in spite of all his theoretical misgivings concerning the value of allegory, evidently he came to love and appreciate the form as no scholar had before him" (88-89).

Piehler notes that "Lewis does not seem to have changed his theoretical position on allegory . . ." ("Myth or Allegory" 204), but Doris T. Myers shows one proof to the contrary. She begins with the same critique as Piehler, then turns to her proof of a change:

> The most important fault of the book [*Allegory*] is an overly narrow definition of the term "allegory," which Lewis applies only to the invention of persons and other "*visibilia*" to express "immaterial fact[s]." He distinguishes allegory from what he calls "symbolism or sacramentalism" (*Allegory* 44-45). [ . . . ]
>
> However, in the introduction to Spenser for *Major British Writers* (1954), Lewis explicitly retracts his previous "nineteenth century" formulation, instead calling allegory a "picture-language . . . ultimately derived . . . from the unconscious" ([Lewis] "Spenser" 141). It is "the

> natural speech of the soul, a language older and more universal than words." He says Freud and Jung "and the practice of many modern poets and prose writers" have taught us this (137). In addition to psychiatrists and writers, he had also learned from the iconographic researches of Erwin Panofsky, Jean Seznec, and Edgar Wind. Unavailable when Lewis was writing *Allegory* in the thirties, these researchers explain many of the visual images found in Spenser's pageants and masques. Unfortunately, this later, more considered understanding of allegory continues to be less known than the facile, overly intellectual definition in the earlier book. (96-97)

Myers claims that the lectures Lewis wrote in the fifties, collected in *Spenser's Images of Life*, represent Lewis's newer understanding of allegory, but she gives scant evidence.

What is intriguing about this new definition is its similarity to Lewis's concept of myth (calling allegory a "picture language"). Lewis, however, refused to identify allegory with myth even after writing the Spenser essay. Chapter four noted that Lewis separated allegory from myth as early as 1922 (*All My Roads* 16 May, 35) and on into the fifties ("Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*" 85 and *Letters* 22 September 1956, 458). His definition of allegory in this 1956 letter suggests that Lewis's view of allegory did not change, at least not extensively:

> My view wd be that a good myth (i. e. a story out of which ever varying meanings will grow for different readers and in different ages) is a higher thing than an allegory (into which *one* meaning has been put). Into an

> allegory a man can put only what he already knows: in a myth he puts what he does not yet know cd not come to know in any other way. (*Letters* 22 September 1956, 458)

Myers responds by saying that, in the letter, "Lewis seems to return to the old definition in *The Allegory of Love*, but in context he is defining 'allegory' in contrast with 'myth,' not distinguishing between allegory and symbol" (Myers 102 *n*.31). It is difficult to see any logic, however, in saying that the same definition of allegory means one thing compared to myth and another to symbol. Furthermore, the letter from 29 December 1958, which also matches the *Allegory* definition, does not separate allegory from myth; it separates allegory from the kind of supposal that led to the creation of Aslan and the Narnia books.

The evidence for Myers's position is not immediately strong, but one cannot ignore Lewis's "Edmund Spenser" essay. Perhaps Lewis found in Spenser's *Faerie Queene* a level of allegory that achieved sacramental (symbolic) or even mythic status. Even as early as the *The Pilgrim's Regress* Afterword, Lewis says that "when allegory is at its best, it approaches myth, which must be grasped with the imagination, not with the intellect" (208). The difference between allegory and myth, even when allegory is at its best, is that allegory never moves out of reality into the world of sub-creation; it is always more about the lower world than that "more central region" that myth approaches. Perhaps, also, as Piehler suggests, Lewis's view of allegory and his use of the term are simply not consistent.

This sub-section concludes with a final look at Lewis on "metaphor." So far two

definitions have been noted: 1. as a general term for figurative language (as opposed to literal); 2. to denote those metaphysical instances where the figurative is somehow also literal. There is yet a third definition.

Smith emphasizes that "Lewis strongly defended the cognitive function [ . . . ] of metaphor" ("C. S. Lewis" 14). He says that Lewis's primary concern with metaphor is "meaning," and that his theory and use of metaphor can be categorized by the terms "semantic, predication, and reference." The semantic element is Lewis's emphasis (with Barfield) that language is ultimately metaphorical (14-15). "Predication" emphasizes the ability of metaphor (over scientific language, for example) to tell "about the quality of an object" (20), and "reference" means that metaphor reveals something about reality itself and not merely human responses to it (21). To these elements one can add the spiritual dimension of the literal-in-the-figurative (see below), and Lewis's emphasis that metaphor is needed in order for people to know spiritual and conceptual things. As Marvin D. Hinten puts it, "All language regarding non-sensory concepts, especially metaphysics, uses metaphor, Lewis contended" ("Metaphor" 273).

Most of what Lewis has to say about metaphor is influenced by Barfield. Chapter four included an examination of *Poetic Diction* and Barfield's contention that language originally meant the figurative and the literal, that metaphorical meanings were as innate in words as literal ones because of a now lost mode of thought he called "concrete thinking" (*Poetic Diction* 210). Today, says Barfield, only metaphor, consciously pursued by the poet, can come close to breaking down the distinction between literal and figurative. Metaphor can also come close to breaking down the distinction between

thinking and experiencing (92).

To this information one can add two more notes (from Barfield's "Poetic Diction and Legal Fiction"). The first new point is that metaphor is neither saying something obscurely that could be said plainly, nor just a technique for decoration; rather it is the source for developing language; Barfield says that most of the language that people call "literal" originates in metaphor ("Legal Fiction" 121). Barfield's second point is that metaphor is the only way one can make new meaning: "This is the true importance of metaphor. I imagine this is why Aristotle, in calling metaphor 'the most important', gives a reason that 'it alone does not mean borrowing from someone else'" (123). The connection between metaphor and meaning is a central issue in Lewis's thought on both topics, hence the need to understand metaphor before one can know what Lewis finally means by "meaning."

"Bluspels and Flalansferes" was written in the thirties and published in *Rehabilitations* in 1939. "Bluspels and Flalansferes" is about the nature of metaphor, its relation to language, and its central place in the making of meaning. Lewis begins the essay with the question of whether or not all language is metaphorical. Those who say it is not, Lewis says, argue for specific, literal meanings in words. Those who say all language is metaphorical argue that such literalists are still being metaphorical, they just do not know it; they are using "dead metaphors," words that are taken as literal because their metaphorical meaning has been forgotten. The literalists respond by saying that what a word used to mean does not affect what it means now; it may have once been a metaphor, but now it is being used in a precise, literal sense ("Bluspels" 135-36). The

issue that Lewis wants to consider in light of this controversy is how much, if at all, human thinking is limited by dead metaphors.

Lewis proceeds with a discussion about how a new metaphor arises: "It may be that when we are trying to express clearly to ourselves or to others a conception which we have never perfectly understood, a new metaphor simply starts forth, under the pressure of composition or argument" (137). In this instance one finds a metaphor by "lucky chance, or inspiration" (138). The second way metaphor arises is when one tries to explain a concept that one understands perfectly "to someone younger or less instructed" who does not understand it. A metaphor is sought which will help the learner grasp the concept (138). In the first method of generating metaphor, the idea one is attempting to understand becomes wed to the metaphor. In the second method, the instructor can freely discard the metaphor as far as his or her own understanding is concerned; that is, after using the metaphor to explain the concept to the student, the instructor does not need to retain the metaphor for his own understanding (137-38).

Lewis next exemplifies the situation of the person being instructed. A difficult concept such as "space is finite" will be meaningless to one who is not a mathematician (138-39). But if a mathematician can invent a metaphor that explains the concept, the result in the mind of the learner will be "that something which before was sheerly meaningless acquires at least a faint hint of meaning" (139-40). In such a case, however, the novice is "entirely at the mercy of the metaphor. If our instructor has chosen it badly, we shall be thinking nonsense. If we have not got the imagery clearly before us, we shall be thinking nonsense. If we have it before us without knowing that it is metaphor [ . . . ]

then again we shall be thinking nonsense" (140). Lewis labels these uses for metaphor as the "Master's metaphor" and the "Pupil's metaphor" (140-41). He argues that these are the extremes between which are intermediate levels of understanding. At the "Master's" level, metaphors are tools for instruction. At the "Pupil's" level, they are "the unique expression of a meaning that we cannot have on any other terms" (141).

Lewis next applies the two kinds of metaphorical knowledge to the issue of dead metaphors and their control on human thinking. If the "Master's metaphor" becomes part of his regular vocabulary so that he uses it unconsciously to refer to a concept, it will have very little influence on his thinking, for he knew the concept before he invented the metaphor. And if he forgets the metaphor completely, his conceptual framework will not have changed (142-43). The "Pupil's metaphor" can fossilize in two ways. If the pupil goes on to learn more about the concept (that space is finite, for example), then his forgetting the meaning of that metaphor which first helped him understand will not matter. He will have learned new ways to understand the concept. But if the pupil forgets the imagery of the metaphor (while remembering the word) and gains no other knowledge of the concept which the metaphor explains, the word will have lost its meaning (144-46). Lewis summarizes:

> Our thought is independent of the metaphors we employ, in so far as these metaphors are optional: that is, in so far as we are able to have the same idea without them. For that is the real characteristic both of the magistral metaphors and of those which become optional [ . . . ] if the pupil learn[s] mathematics. On the other hand, where the metaphor is our only method

> of reaching a given idea at all, there our thinking is limited by the metaphor so long as we retain the metaphor; and when the metaphor becomes fossilized, our 'thinking' is not thinking at all, but mere sound or mere incipient movements in the larynx. (146-47)

The answer to the original question of whether or not all language is metaphorical, then, is that it depends on the knowledge of the speaker and the individual word:

> A word can bear a meaning in the mouth of a speaker who has forgotten its hidden metaphor, and a meaning independent of that metaphor, but only on certain conditions. Either the metaphor must have been optional from the beginning, and have remained optional through all the generations of its use, so that the conception has always used and still uses the imagery as a mere tool; or else, at some period subsequent to its creation, we must have gone on to acquire, independently of the metaphor, such new knowledge of the object indicated by it as enables us now, at least, to dispense with it. (147)

As Lewis attempts to exemplify this conclusion he comes to another conclusion that almost completely reverses it. The pupil who needed a metaphor to understand that space is finite, but who goes on to study mathematics so that he can abandon metaphor, is actually not passing "from symbol to symbolized, but only from one set of symbols to another" (150). Mathematical equations are as unreal as the metaphor. Instead of abandoning figurative for literal language, the person who thinks he is doing so actually substitutes a dead metaphor (one that he does not recognize) for a live one (150). So, for

example, in trying to find literal language that substitutes for the metaphorical term *anima*, psychologists will use such words as "complexes, repressions, censors, engrams, and the like. In other words the *breath* has been exchanged for *tyings-up*, *shovings-back*, *Roman magistrates*, and *scratchings*" (151). Again Lewis summarizes:

> We have already said that when a man claims to think independently of the buried metaphor in one of his words, his claim may sometimes be allowed. But it was allowed only in so far as he could really supply the place of that buried metaphor with new and independent apprehension of his own. We now see that this new apprehension will usually turn out to be itself metaphorical; or else, what is very much worse, instead of new apprehension we shall have simply words–each word enshrining one more ignored metaphor. (152)

The solution to an endless digression of metaphor is not to look for literal language. It is to realize that "[w]hen we pass beyond pointing to individual sensible objects, when we begin to think of causes, relations, of mental states or acts, we become incurably metaphorical" (154). The person who wants to "increase the meaning and decrease the meaningless verbiage in his own speech and writing [ . . . ] must become conscious of the fossilized metaphors in his words; and he must freely use new metaphors, which he creates for himself" (154). Lewis says, "we are never less the slaves of metaphor than when we are making metaphor" (155). One using metaphor to think about finite space or the human soul, and who knows that one's thinking is metaphorical is "in a situation almost infinitely superior to that of the man who" uses metaphor but

"thinks that he is being literal and straightforward" (155).

In the history of writing, then, those who think themselves the most literal and precise have the least to say, and "great creators of metaphor" are the "masters of meaning" (156-57). It is in this context that Lewis proceeds to the essay's final paragraph:

> It will have escaped no one that in such a scale of writers the poets will take the highest place; and among the poets those who have at once the tenderest care for old words and the surest instinct for the creation of new metaphors. But it must not be supposed that I am in any sense putting forward the imagination as the organ of truth. We are not talking of truth, but of meaning: meaning which is the antecedent condition both of truth and falsehood, whose antithesis is not error but nonsense. I am a rationalist. For me, reason is the natural organ of truth; but imagination is the organ of meaning. Imagination, producing new metaphors or revivifying old, is not the cause of truth, but its condition. It is, I confess, undeniable that such a view indirectly implies a kind of truth or rightness in the imagination itself. I said at the outset that the truth we won by metaphor could not be greater than the truth of the metaphor itself; and we have seen since that all our truth, or all but a few fragments, is won by metaphor. And thence, I confess, it does follow that if our thinking is ever true, then the metaphors by which we think must have been good metaphors. (157-58)

One first notes that Lewis's key statements about reason, imagination, truth and meaning appear as an after-thought, almost an addendum to the rest of the "Bluspels" essay, with little clear connection to it. Any conclusions drawn about this last paragraph of the essay must be aided by the conclusions drawn in this study from the Lewis corpus as a whole.

One can posit the following explanations for the elements of this final paragraph of "Bluspels and Flalansferes": truth is an abstract statement of correspondence with reality obtained by reason which operates in the abstract. If a statement is not true, then it is false. Meaning, however, is a product of imaginative connection through metaphor. The perception of a relationship is the act of making meaning. The opposite of meaning is simply non-meaning, or as Lewis says, "nonsense"; thus, if no meaning is found or seen in a relationship, then one would say the relationship is meaningless or nonsensical. Whether or not a meaning corresponds to reality (whether or not it is true) is something that must be determined by reason.

But one cannot reason unless one has something to reason about. The "something to reason about" is not only reality but imaginatively perceived connections in reality. Furthermore, one cannot reason without a tool to reason with and this tool is language, which must rely on metaphor and which cannot be purely literal. Meaning, moreover, is the "antecedent condition" for truth and, therefore, the act of reasoning can be explained as follows: First, language is metaphorical, that is, language functions by making *meaningful* connections between a sign and a signified. Second, reasoning to truth consists of arriving at *language* statements which correspond with reality. Therefore, if reason always depends on language (even the language of mathematics) in order to

function, it will always depend on meaning which is central to the function of language.

Meaning is also antecedent to reason in the sense that, while reason attempts to make connections between thought and reality, meaning is not limited to correspondences between thought and reality. Some meanings may be false, some true in terms of correspondence to reality, but meaning is about more than just reality. For example, the connection I make between Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved* and my own mother's death, which occurred while I was reading the novel, has no real world correspondence, no truth or falsehood, though it has significant meaning to me.

At the same time Lewis says there must be a "kind of truth or rightness in the imagination," that there is a "truth of the metaphor itself." If our thinking is ever "true" then our metaphors must have been "good." What makes a metaphor "good" and what is the kind of "rightness" in the imagination that can be called a kind of "truth"? The answer lies at the end of "Bluspels and Flalansferes":

> It does follow that if those original equations, between good and light, or evil and dark, between breath and soul and all the others, were from the beginning arbitrary and fanciful–if there is not, in fact, a kind of psycho-physical parallelism (or more) in the universe–then all our thinking is nonsensical. But we cannot, without contradiction, believe it to be nonsensical. And so, admittedly, the view I have taken has metaphysical implications. But so has every view. (158)

Perhaps the "psycho-physical parallelism [ . . . ] in the universe" to which Lewis refers is Barfield's idea that meanings–connections–have their own reality: "Men do not *invent*

those mysterious relations between separate external objects, and between objects and feelings or ideas, which it is the function of poetry to reveal. These relations exist independently, not indeed of Thought, but of any individual thinker" (*Poetic Diction* 86). Perhaps the "psycho-physical parallelism" is Lewis's idea that man is connected to reality supernaturally, perhaps by spirit as has been discussed before, perhaps by the essence of Mind that is God Himself (hence the reference to "metaphysical implications"). The "kind" of "imaginative truth" Lewis refers to here, then, would be reality perceived in the imagination. "Good" metaphors are those that make not "true" connections (because truth is abstract) but "real" connections in a Barfieldian sense where "good and light" somehow *are* one, as are "evil and dark" and "breath and soul." Here imagination once again grasps truth because it is the concrete truth of a higher reality, only in this instance the higher is somehow among the lower; it is archetypal and interior (like Aslan's country–further in as well as further up), holding our own reality together with connections that are concretely real but visible only as metaphor, as meanings in the imagination. In this way, as apprehending higher reality only (even an interior archetypal reality that structures the world below), is imagination ever able to apprehend truth, for only in higher reality is truth without abstraction and concretely real.

In regard to metaphor and higher reality, chapter three covered Lewis's claim that metaphor is more accurate than abstraction in helping us to know higher reality. Those who want to use abstractions to describe God, for example, simply substitute weaker metaphors and myths for stronger ones. It was suggested in chapter four that, where metaphor becomes the literal-in-the-figurative, it is mimicking the sacramental, wherein

the symbol both carries and is that which it symbolizes. Finally, it was suggested in chapter four that metaphor (and all poetic language) is closer to the language-permeated-by-spirit (*Hideous* 322) which makes thinking and experiencing a unity. It was suggested that the literalness of metaphor is its ability to draw us more closely to the object of thought so that we experience it less as an abstraction and more as a known reality. Ultimately, metaphorical language is more literal than literal language because it connects us more closely to reality! The ending of "Bluspels and Flalansferes" suggests this contention, as does a conclusion seen earlier in this chapter regarding reason and imagination working together to improve our knowing of the real. What remains is to draw final conclusions about the meaning of "meaning."

Notes

[1] Schakel adds the following notes: First, regarding the efficacy of Anscombe's attack he says that "Miss Anscombe's objections have been analyzed and rebutted by E. L. Mascall [ . . . ] and Richard Webster . . ." (200). Second, to Derek Brewer's report he attaches the following:

> Brewer, "The Tutor: A Portrait," in *C. S. Lewis at the Breakfast Table*, p. 59. See also Roger Lancelyn Green and Walter Hooper, *C. S. Lewis: A Biography* (London: Collins, 1974), pp. 227-28. But cf. Miss Anscombe in the Introduction to *Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Mind*; "The meeting of the Socratic Club at which I read my paper has been described by several of his friends as a horrible and shocking experience which upset him very much. Neither Dr. Havard . . . nor Professor Jack Bennett remembered any such feelings on Lewis' part . . . I am inclined to construe the odd accounts of the matter by some of his friends . . . as an interesting example of the phenomenon called 'projection'" (p. x). (*Reason and Imagination* 200)

[2] See *Miracles* 150-53; *Screwtape* 8, 10; "Religion: Reality or Substitute?" 43; "De Audiendis Poetis" 16-17; "Psycho-Analysis" 300).

[3] These texts from throughout Lewis's life include *Pilgrim's Regress* 147; *Pain* 86; *Miracles* 97-98; "On Stories" 15; "Horrid Red Things" 70; and *Malcolm* 21-22.

[4] According to Kathryn Lindskoog,

> Anthroposophy (like Christian Science) was an early branch of what is

now called New-Age thought. It is an arts-and-crafts-oriented belief system developed in 1912 by Rudolph Steiner (1861-1925), who served previously as the first leader of the German Theosophic Association. Steiner taught that human consciousness is evolving and that his methods (rather than mere reason, tradition, or science) provide a valid way to know reality. He called his movement "spiritual science" and revealed new details about spiritual hierarchies. His exposition of Anthroposophy was titled "Occult Science." ("Anthroposophy" 82)

## Chapter Six: Conclusions

This chapter synthesizes the findings of this study into a "Lewisian epistemology," offering a comprehensive statement about how fact, truth, and myth, perceived in relation, reveal Lewis's epistemological thinking, including the circumstances under which the distinctions among the three terms can break down. Final conclusions will be reached as to what Lewis means by the term "meaning" and its implications on his epistemology. And an answer will be offered to the question: did Lewis ever come to believe that the imagination could be a truth-bearing faculty?

### I. Fact, Truth, and Myth

The emphasis of the *Miracles* chapter fifteen footnote is on myth in history, the measurement for which is truth. In speaking of the Old Testament as myth or history Lewis imagines a spectrum, what he calls a "process of crystallization" (176*n*.), that might be diagrammed as follows:

**The Factual Side**

| Long Period of Preparation: | | Culmination: |
|---|---|---|
| Redemption History | ---------- | The Incarnation |

**The Documentary Side**

| Long Process of Condensing or Focusing: | | Truth incarnate as History: |
|---|---|---|
| Truth in Mythical Form | ---------- | Truth in Fact that is Myth |

**Myth and Truth**

| Myth 'at its worst': | | Myth at 'its best': |
|---|---|---|
| Misunderstood History<br>Diabolical Illusion<br>Priestly Lying | "Mythology chosen by God for the Hebrews to be the vehicle of the earliest sacred truths" (176*n.*)--'first step in the process' toward Incarnation | The New Testament where truth has become "completely historical" (176*n.*)–the ending of the process begun in the Old Testament |
| *Slight Correspondence to Reality* | *Correspondence to Higher Reality and Some Correspondence to History* | *Total Correspondence to Reality* |
| (Mostly Untrue) | (True as Higher Reality Some Historical Truth) | (Historically True Mythically True) |

To understand the triple enigma one must constantly keep in mind the concept of multiple realities. In the higher reality of heaven, myth is both fact and truth and vice versa. Separation occurs in varying ways in the world below. In the fallen world below, myth may correspond to reality very little or (in the Incarnation) completely. The greater the correspondence, the greater the truth. In the world below, truth is abstract. Higher concrete truths can occasionally be glimpsed, but truth on earth focuses on correspondence between mind and reality. Fact below is the phenomenal world of matter. Fact above is utterly concrete, the world of spirit where even abstract ideas take on concrete reality–all culminating in the ultimate facthood of God. This is the conclusion

one can draw by focusing on the first half of the *Miracles* footnote. But there is the second half.

In the second half of the footnote, Lewis presents another graphable spectrum:

**Mythology**----------**History**
Pagan Myths  Mark, Acts
Jonah  David's Court
Story With High----------Story with Low
Mythic Quality  Mythic Quality

*Beauty/Glory*----------*History supersedes*
*supersedes History*  *Beauty/Glory*

Lewis writes, "Just as God in becoming Man is 'emptied' of His glory, so the truth when it comes down from the 'heaven' of myth to the 'earth' of history undergoes a certain humiliation" (177*n.*). The New Testament is "less *splendid*" than the Old which is less "rich" in "imaginative beauty" than Pagan mythologies (177*n.*). Truth is abstracted from myth in the lower reality. Myth primarily, though, appeals with beauty to the imagination. The more true a myth is in our fallen world, the more it divides its attention between abstracting reason and imagination. The myth remains myth because it shows the heavenly pattern made manifest in the real, though fallen, world. But, though the pattern is visible, the beauty of it is lessened, as if all appearances on earth were shaded. This then is another distinction to keep in mind: in heavenly realms, all is possessed of glory. Myth is the beautiful pattern of being, truth is the beautiful known, and fact is the concrete beautiful. In the "valley of separation," though, myth is a beautiful appeal to imagination, truth is abstract thinking by reason, and reality is the shadowlands.

Turning finally to "Myth Became Fact," we see several competing metaphors

make understanding rather difficult; however, each of these metaphors now makes sense after a thorough study of all elements of the enigma. As part of the first of these metaphors Lewis says, "What flows into you from myth is not truth but reality . . ." (66). Here the "reality" that flows from myth is higher reality; the "truth" in this statement is lower (abstract) truth. Lewis next says, "every myth becomes the father of innumerable truths on the abstract level . . . " (66). He means that, though myth is filled with meanings of which some are glimpses of the higher reality (the concrete truth), others are points we abstract from myth (sometimes turning myth into allegory) as truths about universal principles or present reality. This idea is echoed again in another metaphor: "Myth is the mountain whence all the different streams arise which become truths down here in the valley" of separation (66).

A more difficult metaphor is presented next in the essay: "myth is the isthmus which connects the peninsular world of thought with the vast continent we really belong to. It is not, like truth, abstract; nor is it, like direct experience, bound to the particular" (66). One is first tempted to read the metaphor as myth connecting thought to reality, but chapter three revealed that what we think about reality and reality itself are connected by reason, authority, revelation, and intuitions (among others). The resulting correspondence is truth. The point of this metaphor is to be found in the context of the essay as a whole: Lewis wrote "Myth Became Fact" in order to deal with the epistemological problems that result from our inability to both think and experience simultaneously. He is not discussing the problem of how thinking (or thought) can be connected to reality, so much as how our experiences of and thoughts about reality can be connected to each other so

that our entire person can know reality better. In the isthmus metaphor, Lewis is saying that myth helps connect thinking and experiencing toward greater knowing. One more passage in the essay worth review is the following puzzle: "Now as myth transcends thought, Incarnation transcends myth. The heart of Christianity is a myth which is also a fact" (66). Here Lewis is saying that Incarnation embodies myth in that it brings the higher and lower realities together. Mythic story can bring the beauty of the far off numinous world into human experience but mythic history brings the higher reality itself to the phenomenal real below, however dimmed of its glory it might be.

As to the mystery of the triple enigma–under what circumstances can the distinctions among fact, truth, and myth disappear?–the answer has been essentially stated several times in the study. In God, and in heaven (or perhaps in any of several higher realities of which heaven may be only one), transcendent myth is ultimate fact complete with all its glory. Truth is concrete reality, the very person of God and the essence of heaven, not abstract statements about reality that must be discursively reasoned out. Truth is knowable by an intuited experience of concrete reality. And reality is mythic because divine glory is utterly present in it.

## II. The Meaning of *Meaning*

The concept of "meaning" has pushed itself to the forefront of this study, demanding attention as a necessary concept for understanding the key enigma terms and "reason" and "imagination." "Meaning" must now be given a final definition, and conclusions must be drawn on its relationship to reality, truth, imagination, and textual interpretation.

Briefly in chapter two, and at greater length in chapters three, four, and five, the we explored Lewis's definition of the word "meaning." We saw that heaven is that higher reality in which everything means more. This idea connects meaning to the epistemological process of bringing subject and object together. Meaning is tied to knowing–it makes knowing possible–and is more closely tied to imagination and experience than to reason and truth. Meaning can be literal or figurative, but meanings about intangibles are ultimately figurative. Meaning can be concrete, either as imaginative connections or genuinely concrete, i.e. Barfield's "true metaphors" (*Poetic Diction* 87) or "concrete meaning" (92); it can also be abstract, i.e. "Myth Became Fact" where some meanings correspond to reality and when stated abstractly become truths (66). Meaning occurs when connections between objects, experiences, and/or ideas are made in the mind. The closer a thinking subject comes to any object, the greater the meanings perceived. The last thing we learned in chapter four is that there are meanings, relationships, that exist as realities. Barfield argues this, calling such real relations "true metaphors"( 87) or "concrete meaning" (92). As noted in chapter five, Lewis at least suggests this possibility at the end of "Bluspels and Flalansferes" in his reference to "psycho-physical parallelism [ . . . ] in the universe" (158), which was interpreted as the existence of archetypal relations from higher, more interior reality (such as the relation between good and light) that give pattern to our own lower reality. Chapter five concluded with a definition of meaning as "the perception of a relationship."

Now, we can build upon these conclusions. Honda emphasizes that Lewis's concern for meaning is a concern for reality:

> In fact, though Lewis is well known as an advocate of Christianity, actually he is not only that but an advocate of the whole objective reality that has both logos and meaning. [ . . . ] His philosophy of religion starts from the question: "Why is there a universe?" "Why does it go on as it does?" "Has it any meaning?" (*Mere Christianity*, 31). It is a search for the absolute metaphysical authority that gives the ultimate meaning of the existence of the universe and of our lives. In a sense, all of his writings, especially the apologetic ones, are an attempt to answer these questions. (xiii)

Now, apart from the exception of "psycho-physical parallelism [ . . . ] in the universe," where some meanings may be concrete qualities of higher reality ("Bluspels" 158), meaning is not the same as reality, as fact (recall the materialist in "Transposition": "He sees all the facts but not the meaning" [71]). Also, meanings do not always have correspondences in reality (that is, they are not always truth statements); however, as the perception of relations in reality, meaning is the beginning place of knowing reality. Furthermore, as was learned from the passage in *That Hideous Strength* (322), in the realm of higher reality (and perhaps one can add where the higher reality occasionally touches the lower), either Language Himself or language-as-spirit draws subject and object so closely together that perceived relationships multiply to the point that what was isolatable fact is "broken" and "reborn as meaning."

What has been hitherto concluded is that meaning begins in the imagination. Perceived relations occur as imaginative perceptions of metaphor. Meanings become the

"antecedent condition" for the operation of reason ("Bluspels" 157). At the same time, as "Myth Became Fact" points out, some meanings are abstract (66). This was explained as a moment in which the particular meaning also corresponds with reality; when the relation is then stated as an abstract proposition, it is a truth. Many meanings, however, have no correspondence to reality; they are merely perceived relations. Think for example of a "special song" between two lovers. They claim it as their song because it has meaning to them–relation between the song and their feelings has been established. But in reality the song is not theirs by right of having written it, produced it, performed it, or copyrighted it. It simply *means*. Such meanings remain in the purview of imagination. All meanings, then, begin with imagination, and some can also be abstracted into truths.

The last point of discussion about "meaning" has to do with meaning in literature and the problems of interpreting it correctly. In previous chapters Lewis said that Biblical texts may have multiple meanings and that, in myth, the subject (the viewer) and object (the myth) work together to make meaning. Lewis's view of meaning in literature can best be described by George MacDonald's essay "The Fantastic Imagination":

> One difference between God's work and man's is, that, while God's work cannot mean more than he meant, man's must mean more than he meant. For in everything that God has made, there is layer upon layer of ascending significance; also he expresses the same thought in higher and higher kinds of that thought: it is God's things, his embodied thoughts, which alone a man has to use, modified and adapted to his own purposes, for the expression of his thoughts; therefore he cannot help his words and figures

> falling into such combinations in the mind of another as he had himself not foreseen, so many are the thoughts allied to every other thought, so many are the relations involved in every figure, so many the facts in every symbol. (320-21)

This concept is echoed by Lewis in several instances:

> "Creation" as applied to human authorship [ . . . ] seems to me an entirely misleading term. We make εξ υποκειμενων [English words 'out of what is already established'] i. e. we re-arrange elements He has provided. There is not a *vestige* of real creativity *de novo* in us. Try to imagine a new primary colour, a third sex, a fourth dimension, or even a monster wh. does not consist of bits of existing animals stuck together. Nothing happens. And that surely is why our works [ . . . ] never mean to others quite what we intended: because we are re-combining elements made by Him and already containing *His* meanings. Because of those divine meanings in our materials it is impossible we shd ever know the whole meaning of our own works, and the meaning we never intended may be the best and truest one. (*Letters* 20 February 1943, 371)

On the issue of authorial intention (or authorial meaning), Lewis gives the following more detailed explication:

> I have said vaguely 'meaning' or 'intention'. We shall have to give each word a fairly definite sense. It is the author who *intends*; the book *means*. The author's intention is that which, if it is realised, will in his

> eyes constitute success. If all or most readers, or such readers as he chiefly desires, laugh at a passage, and he is pleased with this result, then his intention was comic, or he intended to be comic. [ . . . ] *Meaning* is a much more difficult term. [ . . . ] The nearest I have yet got to a definition is something like this: the meaning of a book is the series or system of emotions, reflections, and attitudes produced by reading it. But of course this product differs with different readers. The ideally false or wrong 'meaning' would be the product in the mind of the stupidest and least sensitive and most prejudiced reader after a single careless reading. The ideally true or right 'meaning' would be that shared (in some measure) by the largest number of the best readers after repeated and careful readings over several generations, different periods, nationalities, moods, degrees of alertness, private pre-occupations, states of health, spirits and the like canceling one another out when (this is an important reservation) they cannot be fused so as to enrich one another. [. . .] ("On Criticism" 139-40)

The first part of the definition of meaning in this passage, "the series or system of emotions, reflections, and attitudes produced by reading it . . .", matches the definition heretofore given of meaning as connection or relationship. But then Lewis discusses "false" and "true" meanings. Do not meanings, however, precede truth or falsehood? As mentioned above, some meanings have correspondence with reality. Such meanings are true. In the case of textual interpretation (note that Lewis is not defining meaning in general, here, but "the meaning of a book"), those meanings are true which the vast

majority of the best readers throughout the years agree are true, and those meanings are false which occur in the mind of the most careless and prejudiced reader after a single reading. This is not to say that there are no meanings in the mind of the poor reader.

In contrast to the authorial intent of man is the authorial intent of God, in which meanings multiply beyond those of any individual human writer. This is especially the case in the writings of the Bible. Lewis discusses this idea at length in *Reflections on the Psalms*:

> Hitherto we have been trying to read the Psalms as we suppose–or I suppose–their poets meant them to be read. But this of course is not the way in which they have chiefly been used by Christians. They have been believed to contain a second or hidden meaning, an "allegorical" sense, concerned with the central truths of Christianity, with the Incarnation, the Passion, the Resurrection, the Ascension, and with the Redemption of man. All the Old Testament has been treated in the same way. The full significance of what the writers are saying is, on this view, apparent only in the light of events which happened after they were dead. (84)

Lewis notes that such an approach to interpretation is distrusted by "the modern mind" and also open to "self-deception." He claims that the approach must be kept, however, for two reasons. First, if the Biblical texts are inspired, then multiple meanings are likely as per his idea that God fills creation, including books, with a greater multiplicity of meanings than any individual author could put into the text (98). His second reason for reading "second meanings" into the Old Testament texts is that Jesus did the same thing.

On the road to Emmaus, for example, He showed the fulfillment of Old Testament texts in His own life: "He accepted–indeed He claimed to be–the second meaning of Scripture" (*Psalms* 98-99).

III. Is There a Place for Imaginative Truth in Lewis's Epistemology?

Finding imaginative truth in Lewis's thinking is the Holy Grail of Lewis criticism. What has always stood in the way of the retrieval of the cup, however, has been Lewis's own statements to the contrary. Developing an answer to the question of imaginative truth that is consistent with all that Lewis has to say about the subject is a matter of focusing on his idea of multiple levels of reality. By doing so, one can indeed answer the question with a very firm "Yes"–and "No."

The problem of imagination was first taken up in chapter three where some tentative connections between imagination and truth were made followed by the conclusion that the connections could better be stated as between imagination and reality, especially higher reality. Truth and imagination are only directly associated in three passages–the familiar *Regress* and conversion letter to Greeves passages, and the letter to T. S. Eliot, in which imagination is called "truth-bearing" (Green and Hooper 126). But these instances have been variously explained, and instances where Lewis says there is no imaginative truth are plain. The thesis herein argued solves the problem. It involves, first, the theory that Lewis's earlier uses of the word "truth" before and just after his conversion are different from those that occur years later (this was argued based on the idea that Lewis's view of reality changed). Secondly, the thesis involves the understanding that Lewis's belief in multiple levels of reality affects his view and use of

the words reason, truth, and imagination.

Much misunderstanding about Lewis's views stems from a false view of the nature of epistemology. The reason so many Lewis critics want imagination to be about truth is because they want it to be about knowledge; they want it to have real epistemological value. The mistake here is in equating knowledge with truth. Epistemology *is* about knowing, but knowing what? Truth? Certainly that is a part of it. But truth is not the end; truth is always *about* something, namely, reality. To know truth is to know about the real, but epistemology is not only concerned with knowing truth; it is concerned with knowing reality and such knowing occurs on empirical, rational, spiritual, emotional, and imaginative levels. Lewis would say that imagination *does* connect us to reality, *does* help us know, but his later definition of truth is very specific, and technical, and must be read that way if the epistemology one is after is indeed Lewis's.

Many of the critics, however, associate epistemology with knowing truth only and so muddle Lewis's use of the word, making truth alone the criterion for a purposeful imagination. Only Thorson's and Payne's significant critiques on epistemology do not associate imagination with truth: Thorson because he misunderstands imagination (see chapter one), and Payne because she rightly knows that Lewis's concern is not so much with finding truth as it is with knowing reality itself (see chapter two). Others, however, make the mistake.

Corbin Scott Carnell, who does understand the importance of reality in epistemology, nevertheless focuses on truth, saying, "we are creatures such that our grasp of truth is scarcely a merely propositional matter. We call for an image" (214). Had he

substituted the word "reality" for "truth" he would have been in line with Lewis. David L. Neuhouser makes this mistake: "Thus, imagination is important in that it allow us to have a knowledge of truth which exceeds propositional truth" (47). "Knowledge," yes; "truth," no. Martha Sammons also misses the mark: "In order to truly perceive and experience–to know–man needs both reason, the natural organ of truth, plus imagination, the organ of meaning and the condition of truth ("Bluspels" 157). Both worlds are necessary parts of the whole truth" (266). She does well until the last sentence. Again it is a matter of confusing the "whole truth" for reality, but Lewis's use of the word truth is very particular. Without following it precisely according to its context in higher concrete reality or our lower reality of the "valley of separation," we are not obtaining a truly Lewisian epistemology. Even Mineko Honda, who focuses on knowing reality, lapses when she substitutes truth for reality, saying, "Lewis thinks that imagination as well as reason has the capacity to examine the truth" (6).

Again, the mistake of previous critics has been to focus on reason and imagination to the exclusion of reality (that which knowing is entirely about). The results of this exclusion have been that multiple levels of reality have never been taken into account as affecting Lewis's definition of truth, and explaining inconsistencies in his use of the term, and/or truth has been used haphazardly as a synonym for reality. The key to understanding is in the *Great Divorce* passage where Lewis says that, in heaven, truth is a concrete thing, rather, Person (43). This idea appears in the "Myth Became Fact" passage where truth is a solid part of the "mountain of myth" in heaven till it falls to our 'arth of fact, the valley of separation or of "*abstractionis*" (66).

There are those who suggest that Lewis's view of imagination changed, that he came to accept imagination as a truth-bearing faculty. We can only say that this is so of "truth" when we refer to it in higher reality, where truth is not abstraction, but concrete reality itself (see below). In one of his very late works, *An Experiment in Criticism*, Lewis clearly indicates that imagination does not bear abstract truth (truth in the lower world). The book is replete with examples of Lewis's claim that imaginative literature is not about truth: The "best type of reader [ . . . ] never mistakes art either for life or for philosophy" (68). Lewis decries his pupils for talking about Tragedy as something that communicates "the tragic 'view' or 'sense' or 'philosophy' of 'life'" (77). He goes on to say that

> many young people derive the belief that tragedy is essentially 'truer to life' than comedy. This seems to me wholly unfounded. Each of these forms chooses out of real life just those sorts of events it needs. The raw materials are all around us, mixed anyhow. It is selection, isolation, and patterning, not a philosophy, that makes the two sorts of play. The two products do not contradict one another any more than two nosegays plucked out of the same garden. Contradiction comes in only when we (not the dramatists) turn them into propositions such as 'This is what human life is like.' (80)

The contrast between imaginative literature and abstract propositional statements of truth is very clear. To take the artist's vision from a work of art or a play, convert it into a philosophy, and then "regard the actual play as primarily a vehicle for that philosophy, is

an outrage to the thing the poet has made for us" (82). Lewis continues:

> I use the words *thing* and *made* advisedly. We have already mentioned, but not answered, the question whether a poem 'should not mean but be'. What guards the good reader from treating a tragedy–he will not talk much about an abstraction like 'Tragedy'–as a mere vehicle for truth is his continual awareness that it not only means, but is. It is not merely *logos* (something said) but *poiema* (something made). [ . . . ] To value them chiefly for reflections which they may suggest to us or morals we may draw from them, is a flagrant instance of 'using' instead of 'receiving'. [ . . . ]
>
> One of the prime achievements in every good fiction has nothing to do with truth or philosophy or a *Weltanschauung* at all. (*Experiment* 82-83)

Lewis believes that literature has a distinctive value, an imaginative one that does not concern its relation to truth. In the last chapter of *Experiment* Lewis explains what the value of literature is, beginning with a summary of the point here stated: "In the course of my inquiry I have rejected the view that literature is to be valued [ . . . ] for telling us truths about life . . ." (130).

What, then, is the answer regarding Lewis's epistemology and imaginative truth? It is first of all to say that "*Imagination is epistemologically reliable* . . ." (Como xxxi), that "imagination can give valid knowledge" (Duriez *C. S. Lewis* 9), and that it is "a necessary means of grasping reality, apprehending its meaning and having glimpses of the

Real world, or heaven" (Honda 42). The epistemological validity of imagination is ultimately what the critics are arguing for. The difference is the focus on knowing reality as a whole, not just truth about it, and the imagination *does* help us to know reality.

Secondly, the answer is that Lewis uses the word "truth" in two ways: as a reference to higher concrete reality (as in the *Divorce* and *Regress* passages), and, far more often, as a reference to abstract statements that correspond to reality here in the lower world. In this "valley of separation," the "*valle abstractionis*" ("Myth Became Fact" 66), truth is not apprehended by imagination unless it is 1) truth-as-higher-reality sent down as a revelation (the "divine gleams" in myth or the metaphors that may be literal as well as figurative), or 2) truth-as-higher-reality that is a "psycho-physical connection," one of the higher archetypal realities that govern and are imaginatively visible in our lower reality as metaphorical meaning. But, then, Lewis's primary term here is "reality" (or "fact," or "experience"), and he only every so often uses the word "truth." For Lewis, imagination apprehends reality, in this world and in worlds above. Reality is certainly tied to truth, but truth is about reality and reality is itself. That imagination has a "kind" of truth, as Lewis says in "Bluspels" (158), is an example of this connection and the dual use of the word "truth." Finally, the imagination can be the "organ of meaning" and the foundation for subsequent reasoning because it can apprehend reality ("Bluspels" 157).

By way of critique one might respond here by saying that the argument of this sub-section is merely an issue of semantics and vocabulary. If this is so, then Lewis makes it so and we are after his epistemological thinking, not our own. Nevertheless,

there is some substantive difference in Lewis and it exists in his theory of multiple levels of reality. Truth is not just semantically different in heaven, it is ontologically different as is knowing. If Lewis is being semantically prudish, he is consistent even to the 1960s with *An Experiment in Criticism*, where he values literature for its imaginative function and *not* because it tells us "truths about life" (130); rather, it exposes us to reality, whether higher or lower, through imaginative experience:

> The nearest I have yet got to an answer [about the value of literature] is that we seek an enlargement of our being. We want to be more than ourselves. Each of us by nature sees the whole world from one point of view with a perspective and a selectiveness peculiar to himself. And even when we build disinterested fantasies, they are saturated with, and limited by, our own psychology. To acquiesce in this particularity on the sensuous level–in other words, not to discount perspective–would be lunacy. We should then believe that the railway line really grew narrower as it receded into the distance. But we want to escape the illusions of perspective on higher levels too. We want to see with other eyes, to imagine with other imaginations, to feel with other hearts, as well as with our own. [ . . . ]
>
> . . . . . .
>
> This, so far as I can see, is the specific value or good of literature [ . . . ] it admits us to experiences other than our own. (*Experiment* 137, 139)

We read literature not for truth but for experiences, and experience (like truth) is tied to the real; it is an integral part of knowing.

Even the experiencing of fictional realities like Tolkien's Middle-earth adds to our knowing because these can carry the story patterns, the myths that connect us to higher reality. Chapter four revealed how myth can circumvent the abstraction of language by being a story pattern in more concrete image. As a mode of concrete *languaging*, myth comes closest to allowing us to know as we would in heaven where thinking and experiencing are unified. It puts us in touch with reality by the mode of higher reality. Lewis said myth "may even be one of the greatest arts; for it produces works which give us (at the first meeting) as much delight and (on prolonged acquaintance) as much wisdom and strength as the works of the greatest poets" (*George MacDonald* 28). By myth, imagination touches higher reality and therefore concrete truth, but as soon as we analyze the myth by reason, we draw a fragment of its reality out into our world of abstraction and state it as truth, or turn the myth into allegory.

## IV. The Dilemmas of Knowing

The problem of knowing is first described by Lewis as an abstract/concrete split, an inability to experience a thing and think about it at the same time ("Myth Became Fact" 65). Further study saw the need to consider also an epistemological split between subject and object. Chapter four considered Sammons's definition of the problem and its causes: "Since the fall in the Garden of Eden, man has separated subject from object, the phenomenal from the invisible numinous world, and *how* he experiences from *what* he experiences" (152). Sammons correctly roots the epistemological problem in the fall.

Knowing involves connections between the knower and a multi-leveled reality. There is the phenomenal world (which we inhabit) and a higher world (or higher worlds)

we were divorced from at the fall. Chapter three covered the conduits that connect humanity to the real: authority, revelation and, especially, reason (and language) in our present existence, and spirit in higher realms. Chapters four and five added myth and imagination as conduits that can connect us to the numinous higher reality.

Spirit, imagination, and myth connect thinking with experiencing. In them the space of abstraction between sign and signified is bypassed (if not eliminated) and knowing becomes more immediate. Through these conduits, meaning is known experientially, without the need for time-bound, abstracting analysis; however, such meaning is known with the kind of conscious awareness that occurs in careful analysis. Imagination as a faculty for knowing and myth as an object of and means for knowing are the last glimpses of a time in human history when subject and object were more closely connected because matter and spirit were more closely connected. And spirit connects the knower directly to higher reality, circumventing the distance created by the fall. Spirit is the conduit that joins subject to object, bridging the chasm between abstract and concrete thinking.

Dual roles for truth, reason, myth, and language have herein been posited. In our world they are tools for knowing; in heavenly realms they are concrete realities: Truth, Reason, Myth, and Language Himself. Myth in the higher realm is God manifesting Himself; it is His glory that permeates heaven which is revealed in glimpses on earth that produce in us stabs of Joy. In our silent planet, truth is correspondence between reality and mind. Language is the mode of operation of reason as conduit between reality and mind. It participates in connecting mind to reality, thus bringing the occurrence of

meaning. But when Language Himself or some Mercurian mediator herein called language-as-spirit affects us, we are connected so perfectly to reality that abstract truth is transcended and fact becomes so completely known as not to be object but meaning itself (*That Hideous Strength* 322). Lewis describes this activity near the end of *Letters to Malcolm*:

> Matter enters our experience only by becoming sensation (when we perceive it) or conception (when we understand it). That is, by becoming soul. That element in the soul which it becomes will, in my view, be raised and glorified; the hills and valleys of Heaven will be to those you now experience not as a copy is to an original, nor as a substitute is to the genuine article, but as the flower to the root, or the diamond to the coal. It will be eternally true that they originated with matter; let us therefore bless matter. But in entering our soul as alone it can enter–that is, by being perceived and known–matter has turned to soul. (123)

When an object becomes conceived or understood by the subjective knower, then that understanding/conception/ becomes an element in the soul. In other words, when we fully understand something, that understanding of the thing becomes part and parcel of our soul (what Lewis terms "that element in the soul"). Moreover, that understanding of the thing, along with the rest of the soul, will be glorified and perfected; that is, our conception of the thing (our "knowledge" of it) will be completely/totally/perfectly in correspondence with the heavenly reality.

Lewis believed that the fall of man led to a subject/object split in human knowing,

that human consciousness in the past involved "mental processes being much more like physical actions" (*Hideous* 284), that the subject/object split led to a separation of concrete experiencing and abstract thinking, and that this separation developed over a period of time beginning from the fall. Chapter four noted that Lewis predicts an end to the subject/object split (and thus the problem of knowing): for a while, "nature and spirit, matter and mind, fact and myth, the literal and the metaphorical, have to be more and more sharply separated, till at last a purely mathematical universe and a purely subjective mind confront one another across an unbridgeable chasm" (*Miracles* 211). But from this descent into fragmented knowing will come a new ascent: "Those who attain the glorious resurrection will see the dry bones clothed again with flesh, the fact and myth remarried, the literal and the metaphorical rushing together" (212). Lewis's ultimate solution to the dilemmas of knowing is an eschatological one. A new nature is to come wherein heaven and earth, the worlds of spirit and matter are united. The old shadowlands will be done away. Real life will have begun.

We conclude with a passage from Schakel's *Reason and Imagination* that compares the endings of *Till We Have Faces* and the book of *Job*. A main point in this study has been to say that epistemology is not as much about knowing truth as it is about knowing reality (of which truth is a part). And herein is the answer to everything:

> Orual's closing words could well have been Job's: "I know now, Lord, why you utter no answer. You are yourself the answer" (p. 308). And Job's closing words could well have been Orual's: "I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know"

> (42:3). Both works deal with alleged injustice in the universe; both present a case against God; and both agree that the case is refuted not by reason but by the nature of God . . . . (86)

In other words, the final answer to all our epistemological questions, all our musings about the nature of reality and our awareness of it, all our speculations about what is really real–the ultimate answer to all these searches is found only in an experience with Reality Himself.[1]

Note

[1] For further study, the reader is directed to the one Lewis essay which says something about almost every topic of this exploration. Fact, truth, myth, reason and imagination are all covered in Lewis's "Is Theology Poetry?" Here the reader will find a Lewisian epistemology that accounts for almost all of his ideas, and it existed in 1944, midway through Lewis's years as a Christian. Lewis covers the question of imaginative truth ("Is Theology Poetry?" 75), Christianity as myth (76, 83) and as fact (77, 84), levels or kinds of imagination (78), the literal-in-the-figurative (85-87), the impossibility of speaking about "things other than physical objects" in language that is other than metaphorical (87-88), and the argument against naturalism as invalidating reason (88-92). The essay is certainly worth the reader's attention.

Works Cited

Abbott, Edwin A. *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions*. 1884. New York: Dover, 1992.

Adey, Lionel. "The Barfield–Lewis 'Great War.'" *CSL: The Bulletin of the New York C. S. Lewis Society* 6 (August 1975): 10-14.

—. *C. S. Lewis's "Great War" with Owen Barfield*. Victoria, BC: Victoria UP, 1978.

Barfield, Owen. *Owen Barfield on C. S. Lewis*. Ed. G. B. Tennyson. Middletown: Wesleyan UP, 1989.

—. "Poetic Diction and Legal Fiction." Lewis, *Essays Presented to Charles Williams* 106-127.

—. *Poetic Diction: A Study in Meaning*. 1928. Middletown: Wesleyan UP, 1973.

—. *Saving the Appearances: A Study in Idolatry*. 1965. 2nd ed. Middletown: Wesleyan UP, 1988.

Benson, Iain T. "Truth." Schultz and West 411-12.

Bramlett, Perry C. "The Great War." Schultz and West 188-89.

Brewer, Derek. Como 41-67.

Burson, Scott R., and Jerry L. Walls. *C. S. Lewis & Francis Schaeffer: Lessons for a New Century from the Most Influential Apologists of Our Time*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity P, 1998.

Carnell, Corbin Scott. "Imagination." Schultz and West 214-15.

Carpenter, Humphrey. *J. R. R. Tolkien: A Biography*. London: Allen & Unwin, 1977.

Como, James T., ed. *C. S. Lewis at the Breakfast Table and Other Reminiscences*. New

York: Macmillan, 1979.

Downing, David C. *Planets in Peril: A Critical Study of C. S. Lewis's Ransom Trilogy*. Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1992.

Duriez, Colin. *The C. S. Lewis Encyclopedia: A Complete Guide to His Life, Thought and Writings*. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2000.

—. "In the Library: Composition and Context." Martin 349-70.

Edwards, Bruce L., Jr. *A Rhetoric of Reading: C. S. Lewis's Defense of Western Literacy*. Provo: Brigham Young UP, 1986.

—, ed. *The Taste of the Pineapple: Essays on C. S. Lewis as Reader, Critic, and Imaginative Writer*. Bowling Green: Bowling Green State U Popular P, 1988.

Edwards, Michael. "C. S. Lewis: Imagining Heaven." *Journal of Literature and Theology* 6.2 (June 1992): 107-124.

Farrer, Austin. "In His Image." Como 242-244.

Filmer, Kath. "The Polemic Image: The Role of Metaphor and Symbol in the Fiction of C. S. Lewis." *Seven: An Anglo-American Literary Review* 7 (1986): 61-76.

Filmer-Davies, Cath. "On Fantasy Stories." *Mythlore: A Journal of J. R. R. Tolkien, C. S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature* 23 (2001): 60-69.

Ford, Paul F. "George MacDonald." Schultz and West 260-61.

Frye, Northrop. *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1957.

Fuller, Edmund. *Myth, Allegory, and Gospel: An Interpretation of J. R. R. Tolkien, C. S. Lewis, G. K. Chesterton, and Charles Williams*. Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1974.

Gardner, Anne. "Myth Became Fact." Schultz and West 288.

Goffar, Janine. *The C. S. Lewis Index: A Comprehensive Guide to Lewis's Writings and Ideas*. Wheaton: Crossway, 1995.

Green, Roger Lancelyn, and Walter Hooper. *C. S. Lewis: A Biography*. San Diego: Harvest/HBJ, 1974.

Gresham, Douglas H. *Lenten Lands: My Childhood with Joy Davidman and C. S. Lewis*. San Francisco: Harper, 1988.

Hannay, Margaret. "C. S. Lewis's Theory of Mythology." *Mythlore: A Journal of J. R. R. Tolkien, C. S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and the Genres of Myth and Fantasy Studies* 1 (1969): 14-24.

—. "The Mythology of *Perelandra*." *Mythlore: A Journal of J. R. R. Tolkien, C. S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and the Genres of Myth and Fantasy Studies* 2 (1970): 14-16.

Harper, Katherine. "G[ertrude] E[lizabeth] M[argaret] Anscombe." Schultz and West 81.

Hinten, Marvin D. "Metaphor." Schultz and West 273-74.

—, and Bruce L. Edwards. "Shadowlands (the Term as Concept)." Schultz and West 374-75.

Holy Bible. New American Standard Translation.

Holyer, Robert. "C. S. Lewis on the Epistemic Significance of the Imagination." *Soundings* 74.1-2 (Spring 1991): 215-41.

Honda, Mineko. *The Imaginative World of C. S. Lewis: A Way to Participate in Reality*. New York: University Press of America, 2000.

Hooper, Walter. *C. S. Lewis: Companion & Guide*. San Francisco: Harper San Francisco,

1996.

—. "Oxford's Bonny Fighter." Como 137-85.

—. "Preface." Lewis, *Spirits in Bondage Spirits in Bondage* xi-xl.

—. "Preface." Lewis, *The Weight of Glory* ix-xxiv.

Howard, Thomas. *The Achievement of C. S. Lewis.* Wheaton: Harold Shaw, 1980.

—. "Perelandra." Schultz and West 316-17.

Klawetter, Darol. "Klawetter's Myth Paper." DejaLewis. 21 Feb. 2000 <http://www.sonic.net/mary/DejaLew-dir/rants/kla-myth1.htm>.

Kuteeva, Maria. "Myth." Martin 265-284.

Lane, Dorothy F. "Resurrecting the 'Ancient Unities': The Incarnation of Myth and the Legend of Logres in C. S. Lewis's *That Hideous Strength*." *Mythlore: A Journal of J. R. R. Tolkien, C. S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and the Genres of Myth and Fantasy Studies* 16 (1990): 9-14.

Lewis, C. S. *The Abolition of Man: Or Reflections on Education with Special Reference to the Teaching of English in the Upper Forms of Schools*. New York: Collier, 1947.

—. *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1936.

—. *All My Roads Before Me: The Diary of C. S. Lewis 1922-1927*. Ed. Walter Hooper. San Diego: Harvest/HBJ, 1991.

—. "Answers to Questions on Christianity." Hayes, Middlesex: Electric and Musical Industries Christian Fellowship, 1944. Rpt. Lewis, *God in the Dock* 48-62.

—. "Behind the Scenes." *Time and Tide* 37 (1 December 1956): 1450-51. Rpt. Lewis,

*God in the Dock* 245-49.

—. "Bluspels and Flalansferes: A Semantic Nightmare." Lewis, *Rehabilitations* 133-158.

—. "'Bulverism', or, The Foundation of 20th Century Thought." *The Socratic Digest* 2 (June 1944): 16-20. Rpt. Lewis, *God in the Dock* 271-277.

—. "Christian Apologetics." Lewis, *God in the Dock* 89-103.

—. "Christianity and Culture." *Theology* 40 (March and June 1940): 166-79 Rpt. Lewis, *Christian Reflections* 12-36.

—. *Christian Reflections*. Ed. Walter Hooper. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967.

—. "*De Audiendis Poetis*." *Studies in Medieval & Renaissance Literature*. Ed. Walter Hooper. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1966. 1-17.

—. "*De Futilitate*." Lewis, *Christian Reflections* 57-71.

—. *The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1964.

—. "Dogma and the Universe." *The Guardian* (19 March 1943): 96 and (26 March 1943): 104, 107. Rpt. Lewis, *God in the Dock* 38-47.

—. "Edmund Spenser." *Studies in Medieval & Renaissance Literature* 121-45. Rpt. of "Edmund Spenser 1552-99." *Major British Writers*. Vol. 1. Ed. G. B. Harrison. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1954: 91-103.

—. "The Empty Universe." *Present Concerns* 81-86. Rpt. of "The Hierarchy of Heaven and Earth." Preface to Harding, D. E. *The Hierarchy of Heaven and Earth: A New Diagram of Man in the Universe*. London: Faber & Faber, 1952.

—. *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama. The Oxford History of*

*English Literature* 3. Oxford: Clarendon, 1954.

—, ed. *Essays Presented to Charles Williams*. 1947. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968.

—. *An Experiment in Criticism*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1961.

—. "The Funeral of a Great Myth." Lewis, *Christian Reflections* 82-93.

—, ed. *George MacDonald: An Anthology*. London: Fount Paperbacks, 1946.

—. *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*. Ed. Walter Hooper. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970.

—. *The Great Divorce*. New York: Collier, 1946.

—. *A Grief Observed*. San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1961.

—. "The Hobbit." *On Stories* 81-82. Rpt. of "A World for Children." *The Times Literary Supplement* (2 October 1937): 714.

—. "Horrid Red Things." *Church of England Newspaper* 51 (6 October 1944): 1-2. Rpt. Lewis, *God in the Dock* 68-71.

—. "Is Theology Poetry?" *The Socratic Digest* 3 (1945): 25-35. Rpt. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory* 74-92.

—. "The Language of Religion." Lewis, *Christian Reflections* 129-41.

—. *The Last Battle*. New York: Harper Collins, 1956.

—. *Letters of C. S. Lewis*. Ed. W. H. Lewis. Rev. ed. Ed. Walter Hooper. San Diego: Harvest/HBJ, 1993.

—. *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer*. San Diego: Harvest/HBJ, 1964.

—. *The Magician's Nephew*. New York: Harper Collins, 1955.

—. "Meditation in a Toolshed." *The Coventry Evening Telegraph* (17 July 1945): 4. Rpt.

Lewis, *God in the Dock* 212-15.

—. *Mere Christianity*. Westwood: Barbour, 1952.

—. "Miracles." *The Guardian* (2 October 1942): 316. Rpt. Lewis, *God in the Dock* 25-37.

—. *Miracles: A Preliminary Study*. 1947. New York: Touchstone, 1975.

—. "Modern Man and His Categories of Thought." Lewis, *Present Concerns* 61-66.

—. "Modern Theology and Biblical Criticism." Lewis, *Christian Reflections* 152-66.

—. "Myth Became Fact." *World Dominion* 22 (September-October 1944): 267-70. Rpt. Lewis, *God in the Dock* 63-67.

—. *Of Other Worlds: Essays & Stories*. Ed. Walter Hooper. New York: Harvest/HBJ, 1966.

—. "On Criticism." Lewis, *Of Other Worlds* 43-58. Rpt. Lewis, *On Stories* 127-142.

—. "On Ethics." Lewis, *Christian Reflections* 44-56.

—. "On Obstinacy in Belief." *The Sewanee Review* 63 (Autumn 1955): 525-38. Rpt. Lewis, *The World's Last Night* 13-30.

—. "On Science-Fiction." Lewis, *Of Other* 59-73. Rpt. Lewis, *On Stories* 55-68.

—. "On Stories." Lewis, *Essays Presented to Charles Williams* 90-105. Rpt. Lewis, *Of Other Worlds* 3-21.

—. *On Stories and Other Essays on Literature*. Ed. Walter Hooper. San Diego: Harvest/HBJ, 1982.

—. "On Three Ways of Writing for Children." *Library Association Proceedings, Papers and Summaries of Discussions at the Bournemouth Conference on 29 April to 2 May 1952*. London: Library Association, 1952. 22-8. Rpt. Lewis, *Of Other Worlds*

22-34.

—. *Out of the Silent Planet*. New York: Macmillan, 1938.

—. *Perelandra*. New York: Macmillan, 1944.

—. *The Pilgrim's Regress: An Allegorical Apology for Christianity, Reason, and Romanticism*. 1933. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981.

—. *Poems*. Ed. Walter Hooper. San Diego: Harvest/HBJ, 1992.

—. "The Poison of Subjectivism." *Religion in Life* 12 (Summer 1943): 356-65. Rpt. Lewis, *Christian Reflections* 72-81.

—. *Present Concerns: Essays by C. S. Lewis*. Ed. Walter Hooper. San Diego: Harvest/HBJ, 1986.

—. "Priestesses in the Church." Lewis, *God in the Dock* 234-239. Rpt. of "Notes on the Way." *Time and Tide* 29 (14 August 1948): 830-31.

—. *The Problem of Pain*. New York: Macmillan, 1940.

—. "Psycho-Analysis and Literary Criticism." *Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association* 27 (1942): 7-21. Rpt. Lewis, *Selected Literary Essays* 286-300.

—. *Reflections on the Psalms*. London: Fontana, 1958.

—. *Rehabilitations and Other Essays*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1939.

—. "Religion: Reality or Substitute." *World Dominion* 19 (September-October 1941): 277-81. Rpt. Lewis, *Christian Reflections* 37-43.

—. "Religion Without Dogma." Lewis, *God in the Dock* 129-146. Rpt. of "A Christian Reply to Professor Price." *The Phoenix Quarterly* 1.1 (Autumn 1946): 31-44.

—. *The Screwtape Letters*. New York: Macmillan,1942.

—. "The Seeing Eye." Lewis, *Christian Reflections* 167-76. Rpt. of "Onward Christian Spacemen." *Show* 3 (February 1963): 57, 117.

—. *Selected Literary Essays*. Ed. Walter Hooper. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1969.

—. "Shelley, Dryden, and Mr. Eliot." Lewis, *Rehabilitations* 1-34.

—. *The Silver Chair*. New York: Harper Collins, 1953.

—. "Sometimes Fairy Stories May Say Best What's To Be Said." *The New York Times Book Review, Children's Book Section* (18 November 1956): 3. Rpt. Lewis, *Of Other Worlds* 35-38.

—. *Spirits in Bondage: A Cycle of Lyrics*. 1919. Ed. Walter Hooper. San Diego: Harvest/HBJ, 1984.

—. *Studies in Medieval & Renaissance Literature*. Ed. Walter Hooper. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1966.

—. *Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life*. San Diego: Harvest/HBJ, 1955.

—. *That Hideous Strength: A Modern Fairy-Tale for Grown-Ups*. New York: Macmillan, 1946.

—. *They Stand Together: The Letters of C. S. Lewis to Arthur Greeves (1914-1963)*. Ed. Walter Hooper. New York: Macmillan, 1979.

—. *Till We Have Faces: A Myth Retold*. 1956. San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1985.

—. "Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*." Lewis, *On Stories* 83-90. Rpt. of "The Gods Return to Earth." *Time and Tide* 35 (14 August 1954): 1082-83, and "The Dethronement of Power." *Time and Tide* 36 (22 October 1955): 1373-4.

—. "Transposition." Lewis, *The Weight of Glory* 54-73.

—. "The Trouble with 'X' . . ." *Bristol Diocesan Gazette* 27 (August 1948): 3-6. Rpt. Lewis, *God in the Dock* 151-155.

—. "The Vision of John Bunyan." *The Listener* 68 (13 December 1962): 1006-08. Rpt. Lewis, *Selected Literary Essays* 146-153.

—. "The Weight of Glory." Lewis, *The Weight of Glory* 3-19.

—. *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses*. Ed. Walter Hooper. New York: Macmillan, 1980.

—. "Why I Am Not a Pacifist." Lewis, *The Weight of Glory* 33-53.

—. "The World's Last Night." Lewis, *The World's Last Night* 93-113. Rpt. of "Christian Hope–Its Meaning for Today." *Religion in Life* 21 (Winter 1952-53): 20-32.

—. *The World's Last Night and Other Essays*. San Diego: Harvest/HBJ, 1987.

—, and E. M. W. Tillyard. *The Personal Heresy: A Controversy*. London: Oxford UP, 1939.

Lindskoog, Kathryn. "Anthroposophy." Schultz and West 82-83.

—. "Dreams." Schultz and West 143-44.

Lobdell, Jared C. "An Irritation of Oysters: C. S. Lewis and the Myth in Mythopoeia." *Extrapolation* 39.1 (Spring 1998): 68.

MacDonald, George. "The Fantastic Imagination." *A Dish of Orts: Chiefly Papers on the Imagination and on Shakespeare*. 1893. Edenbridge: Norwood, 1977. 313-22.

Macdonald, Michael H. "Aristotle." Schultz and West 86.

—. "Plato." Schultz and West 324.

—. "Reality." Schultz and West 348.

Manlove, C. N. "C. S. Lewis and *Perelandra*." *Modern Fantasy: Five Studies*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1975. 99-151.

Markos, Louis A. "Myth Matters." *Christianity Today* (23 April 2001): 32-39.

Martin, Thomas L., ed. *Reading the Classics with C. S. Lewis*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000.

Martindale, Wayne. "Myth." Schultz and West 287-88.

—, and Jerry Root eds. *The Quotable Lewis: An Encyclopedic Selection of Quotes from the Complete Published Works of C. S. Lewis*. Wheaton: Tyndale, 1989.

Morris, Francis J., and Ronald C. Wendling. "Coleridge and 'The Great Divide' Between C. S. Lewis and Owen Barfield." *Studies in Literary Imagination* 22.2 (Fall 1989): 149-59.

Murrin, Michael. "The Dialectic of Multiple Worlds: An Analysis of C. S. Lewis's Narnia Stories." *Seven: An Anglo-American Literary Review* 3 (1982): 93-112.

Musacchio, George. *C. S. Lewis, Man & Writer: Essays and Reviews*. Belton: University of Mary Hardin-Baylor, 1994.

Myers, Doris T. "Spenser." Martin 87-104.

Neuhouser, David L. "Higher Dimensions: C. S. Lewis and Mathematics." *Seven: An Anglo-American Literary Review* 13 (1996): 45-64.

Norwood, W. D., Jr. "Unifying Themes in C. S. Lewis' Trilogy." *Critique* 9 (ND): 67-80.

Payne, Leanne. *Real Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Works of C. S. Lewis*. Westchester: Cornerstone, 1979.

Piehler, Paul. "Myth or Allegory? Archetype and Transcendence in the Fiction of C. S. Lewis." Schakel and Huttar 199-212.

—. "Visions and Revisions: C. S. Lewis's Contributions to the Theory of Allegory." Bruce L. Edwards, *The Taste of the Pineapple* 79-91.

Price, Michael W. "Seventeenth Century." Martin 140-160.

Sammons, Martha C. *"A Far Off Country": A Guide to C. S. Lewis's Fantasy Fiction.* New York: University Press of America, 2000.

Sayer, George. *Jack: A Life of C. S. Lewis*. 1988. Wheaton: Crossway, 1994.

Sayers, Dorothy. "'. . . And Telling you a Story': A Note on *The Divine Comedy*." Lewis, *Essays Presented to Charles Williams* 1-37.

Schakel, Peter J. "Reason." Schultz and West 348-50.

—. *Reason and Imagination in C. S. Lewis: A Study of* Till We Have Faces. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984.

—. "Seeing and Knowing: The Epistemology of C. S. Lewis's *Till We Have Faces*." *Seven: An Anglo-American Literary Review* 4 (1983): 84-97.

—, and Charles A. Huttar, eds. *Word and Story in C. S. Lewis*. Columbia: U of Missouri P, 1991.

Schultz, Jeffrey D., and John G. West Jr., eds. *The C. S. Lewis Readers' Encyclopedia.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998.

Smith, Lyle H., Jr. "C. S. Lewis and the Making of Metaphor." Schakel and Huttar 11-28.

—. "Hierarchy." Schultz and West 203-04.

Thorson, Stephen. "Knowing and Being in C. S. Lewis's 'Great War' with Owen

Barfield." *CSL: The Bulletin of the New York C. S. Lewis Society* 15 (November 1983): 1-8.

—. "'Knowledge' in C. S. Lewis's Post-Conversion Thought: His Epistemological Method." *Seven: An Anglo-American Literary Review* 9 (1988): 91-116.

Tolkien, J. R. R. "On Fairy-Stories." *The Tolkien Reader*. New York: Ballantine, 1966. 33-99.

Walker, Jeanne. "Science Fiction: A Commentary on Itself as Lies." *Modern Language Studies* 8 (Fall 1978): 29-37.

Wolfe, Gregory. "Essential Speech: Language and Myth in the Ransom Trilogy." Schakel and Huttar 58-75.