

PART ONE

THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF C. S. LEWIS

1. INTRODUCTION

It is considered by many in contemporary theological academia that the impact of Post-modernism upon Christian thinking has been of a radical and irreversible nature (McCallum 1996:199). Especially in the area of dogmatics and evangelism (Foshaugen *South African Baptist Journal of Theology* 2004:142), long held axioms that were simply taken for granted in the past are now being challenged by the innate relativism and subjectivism of this new mind-set (McCallum 1996:14). This erosion is not only fundamentally impacting upon theological thinking in general, but the challenge it poses to the conservative wing of the Church is especially profound. The very life force of Evangelicalism is its dogmatic objectivity. Evangelicalism is a school of Christianity, which cannot survive without its propositional truth claims. If therefore biblical Christianity is to survive the challenge of this new world-view which denies any communicable absolutes and insists upon subjectivity and relativism (which of course are Evangelicalism's antithesis), then an adequate solution must be rendered for the problems that Post-modernism raises.

It is my conviction that the Christian writings of C. S. Lewis have a vital relevance towards potentially addressing the subjectivist quagmire of contemporary post-modern theology. My reason for this confidence is the motivation behind this dissertation. C. S. Lewis, although a layman as well as a 'mere' amateur theologian has certainly not only stood the test of time

for relevance in a world of competing ideologies, but in this Post-modern era is now being read and discussed more than ever before (Peters 1998:xi). His works are now published in many major world languages. For a religious author his work's popularity is unprecedented on this scale (Walker 1998:213). It is certainly not difficult for me to substantiate this fact. His Christian writings are sold today in great quantity. He is read and discussed widely by both clergy and layman across all denominational divides (Peters 1998:xii, Walker 1998:213). Lewis' Christian works have, sales-wise, never attracted more interest than they do today, in spite of the supposedly anti-intellectualism of our era. This enigma deserves some serious consideration. The strangest thing about the unprecedented success of Lewis' Christian work is that in actuality, the subject matter of his writing *per se* and the terminology that he uses therein are certainly nothing novel. In a discipline such as theology that seems to thrive on innovative and new approaches every ten years or so in order to maintain academic interest and motivation, Lewis is consistently conservative. The argumentative structure that he utilises for describing the Christian world-view is orthodox. Lewis always insisted in his writings that he was no theological innovator but rather a translator to the modern person of previously established doctrine (*Mere Christianity* 1989:8). Lewis felt doctrinally quite at home with the likes of Luther, Augustine and Tertullian. This is clearly obvious to anybody who has ever read his work. In spite of his dogged conservatism however, the impact of his writing is always fresh

and very relevant when applied to the contemporary human situation. This ‘appealing conservatism’ is proven successful not only by the sale of his Christian books in numerous world languages, but also by the amount of academic work that has been (and is being) devoted to his literature (Walker 1998:213). This, as well as numerous C. S. Lewis societies and discussion groups around the world. The appeal of Lewis’ writings is indeed an enigma especially in our Post-modern era. Whereas so many contemporary theologies seem to move with the times and keep pace with current philosophical trends, Lewis always remains *kerugmatik*. He always arranges his apologetics around the Apostolic and biblical scaffolding of theistic dualism, creation, sin, and redemption. The inevitable question therefore arises, what makes his theological writing so universally appealing and credible among contemporary reading Christians? (I take it for granted, obviously, that he is indeed recognised as a great influence on popular Christian thinking.) It is the answer to this question that I wish to devote the present chapter.

1.1 FOUNDATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

In order to attempt to discern successfully essential epistemological ingredients extant in Lewis’ works that may help to explain his continuing relevance and popularity as a Christian apologist and thinker, it is first necessary to discover exactly what it is that we are to examine concerning

Lewis' theology. What is to be the object of our scrutiny in this particular exercise? It is here that I wish to make my own particular approach to Lewis studies transparent. In the disciplined study of literature there is always a danger of becoming sidetracked into chasing 'red herrings' and being lured into unnecessary diversions. At the very onset of this present work therefore, I intend determining with as much clarity as possible exactly where my thesis' focus is *not* to lie.

1.2 **THIS WORK AVOIDS THE SYSTEMATISING APPROACH**

It is interesting to observe how many researchers on C. S. Lewis have tended to sift through their research material in order, it seems, to edit, trim, and produce some systematic theology that is sympathetic to their own cause. Lewis has been made posthumously the champion of the Fundamentalists, the Roman Catholics, Liberals as well as conservatives (Schakel 1984:xii). Although it is inevitable that such a powerful and influential spokesman should be coveted as a party defender, it is both poor scholarship and narrow thinking to do this. To edit C. S. Lewis to somehow 'fit the occasion' and to use him as a mere '*ventriloquist dummy*' for '*the cause*' will do precious little for the true advance of Lewis scholarship. An example of the type of research I address is as follows. Michael Christensen, in his 1979 work entitled *C. S. Lewis on Scripture* presents Lewis in such a way as to make him the spokesman for the Neo-

orthodox school of theology. In order to ‘prove’ that Lewis did not believe in the inerrancy of Scripture Christensen presents an exhaustive list of statements taken from Lewis’ works that tend to confirm his thesis. Christensen sums up his research as follows (Christensen 1979:94),

Lewis would acknowledge that it is the ongoing revelation of God in Christ, not its embodiment in Scripture, which is infallible. It is the message of the living Word of God, not the medium of its expression, which is authoritative. Scripture, as the primary medium of Divine revelation, conveys, presents, or as Lewis prefers, ‘carries’ God’s truth in finite human form.

The problem with this however, is that Lewis never did, in so many words, make the above statement at all! The above conclusion was drawn from out of his many works by the sifting, editing, and systematising of the desired relevant data. An interesting work on Lewis by Kathryn Lindskoog entitled, *The C. S. Lewis Hoax* (1988), it is a prime example of how a particular thread of Lewis’ thought can be *wound* into a *yarn* of the biographer’s own devising and purpose. A serious reading of Lewis’ Christian works will reveal on the other hand that such an approach to his writings is ultimately arbitrary and subjective. Lewis as a writer of Christian apologetics was certainly not a capable and consistent systematic theologian (Walker 1998:62). There are as many statements made by him in his works that could be used by an ingenious redactor to verify any number of opposing and conflicting conclusions (see Joe R. Christopher’s article, *Biographies and Bibliographies on C. S. Lewis*. Walker 1998:216)!

Lewis himself, in a number of his writings, freely confessed that he was not writing as a professional theologian, but as a humble believer simply sharing his faith in the best way that he was able (i.e. *The Four Loves* 1977:128). On a number of occasions Lewis however had made it clear that he submitted completely to the '*Book of Common Prayer*' (Which of course in those days contained the pro Protestant *39 Articles*). He also made it abundantly clear that he wished to keep his personal religious scruples private (more will be written on this issue in the next paragraph). Lewis, for example, makes the following statement in the introduction to his book, *Mere Christianity* (1989:8),

I do not in the least wish to conceal or evade responsibility for my own beliefs. To quote Uncle Toby: 'They are written in the Common-Prayer book.'

The danger clearly was that I should put forward as common Christianity anything that was peculiar to the Church of England or (worse still) to myself. I tried to guard against this by sending the original script of what is now book two to four clergymen. (Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist, Roman Catholic) and asking for their criticism. The Methodist thought that I had not said enough on faith, and the Roman Catholic thought I had gone too far on the comparative unimportance of theories in explanation of the Atonement. Otherwise all five of us agreed.'

I do however realise that there is a real (even if unconscious) danger of me forcing Lewis into my own particular mold in writing this dissertation. I therefore need to make it very clear from the onset that my intention is not to systematise Lewis, but rather to point out two particular pillars that I

believe constitute his epistemology and tend to hold up his very effective approach to the theology of apologetics. With this completed, I shall then attempt to demonstrate how his approach can be used effectively to address the epistemological question raised by present Post-modern epistemological challenges to evangelical theology.

1.3 **THIS WORK AVOIDS THE BIOGRAPHICAL APPROACH**

The second direction that I wish to avoid is as follows. A substantial amount of recent Lewis scholarship has tended to focus primarily upon the person of C. S. Lewis at the expense of his actual writings. This is admittedly a fashionable trend within the discipline of literary criticism, where it seems that the cultural, sociological, psychological, and even physiological aspects of an author are used in order to construct a rationale that will help explain the author's works. Now, of course it has to be admitted without argument that an author's cultural and psychological conditioning must indeed play an important role in the formation anything produced. The diligent student must consider that there are indeed external factors that have influenced an author to attain whatever was produced in writing, so much need not be debated. The factor being considered however needs qualification. One must not be led to the misleading conclusion that this has to be the main object in the work of literary scholarship. It is many times taken for granted that the priority in

literary study is to construct justifications for a writer's work out of ingeniously gleaned insights on the author's psychological and cultural constitution (McCallum 1996:86). This seems to have been the approach taken by so many recent C. S. Lewis scholars.

An example of this approach can be seen in the work of A. N. Wilson in his 1992 biography. Here Wilson links Lewis' Christian convictions to psychological impulses caused by the death of his mother when he was still a small child as well as the guilt that he felt over his perceived neglecting of duty when his father had died (Sayer 1997:xii). Wilson in my opinion produced an interesting biography, but failed to shed constructive light on the subject matter of Lewis' writings themselves. Literary insight fails in his book simply because at the expense of literary content examination, Wilson subjects Lewis to a psychological scrutiny. This would be acceptable if Wilson's field of enquiry had been limited to mere biography. Another Lewis scholar Peter J. Schakel tends to devote his efforts to the examination of a supposed conflict within Lewis' thinking between the logical and strictly rationalistic mind of Lewis and his inward longings for the unexplainable which developed over time into a synthesis. Schakel writes (1984:xi),

If Lewis studies are to progress and become increasingly precise and illuminating, it will be necessary to attend to chronology and to attend to specific context which generated particular works, as well as general historical milieu in which Lewis' thought developed.

I by no means wish here to decry completely the above approach to the study of Lewis. Biography has its rightful place as long as it is not confounded with pure literary criticism so as to be seen as one and the same discipline. It needs to be seriously asked however whether Lewis' writings *per se* are truly illuminated by such a scrutiny? It may be well to write an interesting biography of the man himself, but will it really throw light on the message that the writer intended to convey? The answer to this question of course depends entirely upon the starting point from which one begins one's enquiry. One needs to ask, 'what is the object - the intended goal of one's own particular approach to the writings that are intended for study?' Is it possible to intelligently study any author's work and not be drawn into undercurrent biographical considerations? Can the study of a work of literature ever be separated from the author of the work? Much Post-modern literary criticism would answer in the negative (Cahoone 1996:336, McCallum 1996:87). If however, the writer and the writer's work are really inseparable, then surely it will be impossible to ever come to an adequate appreciation of any literary work without first possessing relevant insights on the author's own personal life and times. Is this really so however? I would like to suggest here that the apparent dilemma is hardly as insurmountable as it may at first appear especially if we firstly define what we are looking for in Lewis' Christian writings.

The problem of where to begin a credible study on C. S. Lewis' position and its relevance for contemporary theology may be solved if we firstly realise that there is more than one way in which to study literature. Two points will explain this statement.

Firstly, *genre* must be allowed to dictate the approach to interpretation. Admittedly, some forms of writing are indecipherable without the reader possessing some prior knowledge on the person who composed the work. Some forms of literature demand this, and this very fact is usually implied in the writing itself. The writer in this case takes it for granted that the reader knows the pre-determined frames of references that are being used. For example, writing that is essentially self-expressive - that tends towards being a communication of subjectivity applies here. One could point to authors such as Hardy, Joyce, and D. H. Lawrence to illustrate this type of sub-*genre*. Also writings where the expressions written cannot make proper sense without an underlying context applies here too, be that underlying context historical, biographical, or even political. Here writers like John Steinbeck, George Orwell, and in a sense, even Charles Dickens could be noted. A better understanding of the above kind of literature may be greatly enhanced by the use of biographical scrutiny of the author. Having stated this however, it must be stressed that not all literature requires such an approach.

A distinction needs to be kept in mind, which may help to clarify this argument. A work may be written with the intention of being primarily *expressive* in nature, or it may be primarily *informative*. Of course, both of these elements can be, and usually are co-existing as a hybrid in most known works of literature - it is very difficult to be expressive without also being informative at the same time (and *vice versa*). What needs to be understood however, is that there are some works existing that are written and are intended to be read as *primarily informative* in nature. Certain objectivity is assumed in this type of writing. The author intends for the reader to focus attention upon the subject that is being communicated. In this case, the writer serves as a pointer, an indicator, *to a third party* - something which stands objective to both the writer and the reader. Now, assuming that such writing is possible and that it does exist, then any critical reading of such a work that tended to read the author's cultural and psychological significance onto it would prove in the final analysis to be irrelevant. It would also greatly hinder the reception of the originally intended message of the work.

The second argument why I am reluctant to base this dissertation on the biographical approach is that Lewis himself I am certain, would not have wished to be scrutinised in this way. Lewis clearly and unambiguously rejected such a subjective approach to interpretation. In his work *The Personal Heresy* Lewis writes (Schakel 1984:115),

The poet is not a man who asks me to look at *him*; he is a man who says 'look at that!' and points. The more I follow the pointing of his finger the less I can possibly see of *him*...To see things that the poet sees, I must share his consciousness and not attend to it. I must look where he looks and not turn around and face him. I must make of him not a spectacle, but a pair of spectacles.

In his last work on literary criticism that he wrote in 1961, '*An Experiment in Criticism*', Lewis lamented this modern pre-conceived approach to interpreting literature (1992:138), and suggested that proper reading involves the reader co-operating with the intention of the writer. This would succeed in attaining the object of the exercise - the conveyance of information from one party to the other. If the intention of the writer is indeed to communicate himself/herself to the reader then obviously biographical approach is relevant. If however the author intended solely to communicate a *third party fact*, and this intention is clear, then it should be read as such. The simple exercise of reading objective communication cannot be successfully done as long as the reader is placing the focus of attention on the writer at the expense of the writing. Lewis writes (*An Experiment in Criticism* 1992:116),

If you already distrust the man you are going to meet, everything that he says or does will confirm your suspicions. We can find a book bad only by reading it as if it might, after all, be very good...We must empty our minds and lay ourselves open. There is no work in which holes can't be picked; no work that can succeed without a preliminary act of goodwill on the part of the reader.

If this point is not made clear from the very onset of this project then there is a real possibility of the reader becoming sidetracked into ‘if’ or ‘why’ the study seems to be divorced from Lewis’ history and environment. I believe that in most of his Christian writings Lewis himself intended his work to serve as a pointer to a third party object and was not trying to ‘bare his soul’ to the reader (Lewis. *Mere Christianity* 1989:6). It is the intention of the present writer therefore to approach Lewis’ work with the primary focus on the objective information that he surely wished to convey to his reader. In the following chapters it will become hopefully clearer why this approach is essential if the theological works of Lewis are to be used as an effective answer to the question of the present Post-modern theological stalemate.

1.4 **THIS WORK WILL FOCUS ON THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL STRUCTURE THAT UPHOLDS AND MOTIVATES LEWIS’ WORKS**

Lewis apologetics do not aim at substantiating the validity of the *kerugmatic* statements of faith *per se*. The intention behind all of Lewis’ Christian works, aims to establish an appropriate paradigm in which orthodox Christian evangelism is possible in the first place (Peters 1998:57). In his 1947 book entitled, *Miracles*, Lewis begins his argument for the reality of supernatural evidence in this way (1990:7),

In all my life I have only met one person who claims to have seen a ghost. And the interesting thing about the story is that the person disbelieved in the immortal soul before she saw the ghost and still does not believe after seeing it. She says that what she saw must have been an illusion or a trick of the nerves. And obviously, she may be right. Seeing is not believing.

For this reason, the question whether miracles can occur can never be answered simply by subjective experience. Every event that might claim to be a miracle is, in the last resort, something presented to our senses, something seen, heard, touched, smelled, or tasted. And our senses are not infallible. If anything extraordinary seems to have happened, we can always say that we have been the victims of an illusion. If we hold a philosophy that excludes the supernatural, this is what we always shall say. What we learn from experience depends on the kind of philosophy we bring to experience. It is therefore useless to appeal to experience before we have settled, as well as we can, the philosophical question.'

Lewis believed that the average Western, twentieth century person was largely deprived (by ontologically materialistic indoctrination) of any mental ability to comprehend intelligently any spiritual conceptions. Lewis therefore regarded his primary task as a Christian apologist to be that of building conceptual foundations and connecting frames of references. This he believed would enable an individual brought up in the industrialised and secular Western world, to be able to grasp spiritual reality – something that had been taken for granted by so many previous generations. Lewis writes (*Timeless at Heart* 1991:117), 'One thing at least is sure. If the real

theologians had tackled this laborious work of translation about a hundred years ago, when they began to lose touch with the people (for whom Christ died), there would have been no place for me.'

Although it is almost indisputable that Lewis' theological thought must have developed over the thirty years that he was involved in producing Christian literature (Schakel 1984:xi), there is nothing doctrinal that is substantially different in any of his works - from his first Christian book to his last. Lewis himself (*Christian Reunion and other Essays*) claimed as late as 1963 that the doctrine that he had presented in his books suggested no substantial change in his theology (1990:86). Although Lewis tended in later years to write more mythologically and devotionally than his earlier more apologetical works, the subject matter remained consistently orthodox. There are, from Lewis' first Christian publication, *A Pilgrim's Regress* in 1933, until his posthumous 1963 book on prayer, *Letters to Malcolm*, two consistent themes, which run through everything that he wrote on spiritual matters. These are:

1.4.1 An Uncompromising Acceptance of the Reality of the Supernatural Realm.

Whereas much modern theology struggles to reconcile the Kantian distinction between *noumena* and *phenomena* (Bubner1997:17),

Lewis' theology thrives thereon. The reluctance of many thinkers to take the supernatural seriously is never found in any of Lewis' Christian writings. Patrick writes (Walker 1998:162),

In the end we are given in all of Lewis' works a universe shot through with goodness and truth, with practical reason and *Logos*, a universe like but unlike Lewis' teachers. Philosophically, this representation of reality is eminently defensible. It is traditional and within certain limits can claim as authorities Plato, Plotinus, Dionysius, and in part St. Augustine and St. Thomas, as well as Leibniz and Berkley. It does explain experience and it explains it because it is, unlike the niggling skepticism of the Oxford realists, and however flawed, still significantly true.

Lewis describes in his characteristically lucid style exactly what he understands by the term 'supernatural' in the first chapter of his 1947 book *Miracles* (1990:13),

The Supernaturalist believes that one Thing exists on its own and has produced the framework of space and time and the procession of systematically connected events which fill them. This framework and filling he calls Nature. It may or may not, be the only reality which the one Primary thing has produced.

The personal and absolute existence of a God, along with the reality of miracles and Divine revelation are corollaries of the above. Jacques Sys (Walker 1998:176) renders an adequate description of what the 'supernatural' position meant to Lewis.

Facthood is the first ingredient of the formula, not merely in the historical sense of actual events, but in the more mysterious and so to speak 'magical' sense of the word. God is a 'thing' not an idea; God is also a person, He is 'this' God; and as an intensely personal thing, He is that 'resisting material, the 'untame' God whose nature and will cannot be reduced to reason, whose very 'facthood' cannot be forced into the corset of logical categories.

Lewis had come to a belief in Theism even before his conversion to Christianity. His philosophical training had led him to the discovery of the great Classic Idealists and Neo-Platonists, and later on, of his much loved Berkley (*Surprised by Joy* 1971:178). These all served in confirming within him the already held conviction that ideas were spiritual in nature (as opposed to physical). It followed by clear inference from this, that if an 'absolute' Ideal were to truly exist, then it would be something 'wholly other' in essence, independent and separate from the physical *cosmos*. Upon his conversion, Lewis had no difficulty therefore in recognising the supernatural 'otherness' of the God of Christian Faith (*Surprised by Joy* 1971:181). The Christian Theistic world-view is an essential element in every Christian book that he wrote (Schakel 1984:86). It enabled him as a Christian apologist to rationally justify and accommodate into his argumentation the reality of the supernatural without having to appeal to mysticism or the occult. This essential

element in Lewis' apologetic appeal I will enlarge upon in the following chapter.

1.4.2 A Confidence in and the Utilisation of the Logical Faculties to arrive at Rationally Induced and Deduced Conclusions.

The second pillar that supports Lewisian theology is his confident usage of rationality, logic, and language, as vehicles to communicate Divinity and stimulate spiritual awareness. Lewis has frequently been accused of trying to reduce Sublime Mystery to fit comfortably within human comprehension (Wilson 1992:42, Sayer 1997:308). This however, I believe is a misunderstanding of Lewis' approach. Although he held a great regard for the medieval scholastics, Lewis was not himself reductionist in his appeal to rationality in spiritual matters. As I shall demonstrate in chapter three of this dissertation, Lewis understood human rationality to be something that is instrumentally co-ordinated and fitted towards the supernatural enigma beyond the natural realm. Lewis writes in his 1940 address at Magdalen College (*Christian Reflections* 1991:88),

To understand that logic must be valid is to see at once that this thing we all know, this thought, this mind, cannot in fact be alien to the nature of the universe. Or, putting it the other way round, the nature of the universe cannot really be alien to Reason. We find that matter always

obeys the same laws, which our logic obeys. When logic says that a thing must be so, Nature always agrees.

How Lewis' consistent appeal to rationality concurs with his belief in a co-existing supernatural reality, I believe, forms the wonderful synthesis that is Lewisian theology, and that which is able to present a credible answer to the post-modern challenge at hand. I have coined a term that I believe encapsulates the use of these two essential pillars of Lewis' theology (belief in the supernatural and the appeal to a corresponding rationality). I refer to this as *the accommodated rational* approach to theology. This approach I will show is basic to all that Lewis ever wrote on the subject of Christianity. From Lewis' first Christian book until his last it can be clearly recognised that his *accommodated rational approach* is the very motivational factor in all that he says. My intention in this dissertation is to point this Lewisian epistemology out in greater detail by showing how Lewis arrives at and justifies these two pillars in his various writings. This will be the material of the following three chapters. Once this has been established, I can then proceed to demonstrate how this very approach is relevant and also needed in our own day to answer the ambiguities of Postmodernism.

1.5 EVIDENCE FOR THE REALITY OF A SUPERNATURAL REALM

An unflinching conviction concerning the existence of supernatural reality (as opposed to a *closed system* Naturalism) is inseparable from the theology that is presented in all of his Christian writings. The Lewisian understanding of this term *supernatural* is that of a reality that is *wholly other* and absolutely *independent* of the natural realm of human experience. This realm beyond natural phenomenon however, is somehow the cause and the sustenance of the natural realm. God, the absolute essence of this supernatural realm, stands in relation to our experienced universe of matter, energy, space, and time, comparable to, in an analogous way, the relation between an author and a character in the novel. Lewis made use of this analogy a number of times in his writings. Here is a prime example (*Miracles* 1990:183),

In the play Hamlet, Ophelia climbs out on a branch overhanging a river: the branch breaks, she falls and drowns. What would you reply if someone asked, 'Did Ophelia die because Shakespeare for poetic reasons, wanted her to die at that moment - or because the branch broke?' I think that one would have to say 'For both reasons.' Every event in the play happens as a result of other events in the play, but also every event happens because the poet wants it to happen. All the events in the play are Shakespearean events; similarly, all events in the real world are providential events...'Providence' and Natural causation are not alternatives; both determine every event. Both are one.

Lewis, it is abundantly clear, is a thorough going Supernaturalist. He supports his conviction by means of rational argument (This will be discussed in great detail in the following chapter). This fact though, does certainly not signify that he believed that he could prove God's existence conclusively merely by reason or that he held no regard for Divine initiative in revelation, which is fundamental to orthodoxy (Calvin 1957:64). Lewis was not, as has been suggested (Sayer 1997:308), a subscriber to purely Natural theology. To Lewis, Divine initiative in revelation is absolutely essential for any human comprehension of Divinity to exist at all (*The Four Loves* 1997:127). Gratuitous revelation is the very first stratum of all true Christian theology. Yet the question needs to be asked, 'how restricted, or how widespread is God's revelation?' Lewis would contend that Divine revelation is built into the very fabric of human consciousness as Scripture itself affirms (Psalm 19:1, Romans. 1:18 - 20). To Lewis, Divine revelation reaches its zenith in the Word of God, Jesus Christ, as confirmed in the sacred canon of Holy Scripture (*Miracles* 1990:119), yet revelation filters down by degrees through many and various channels (*God in the Dock* 1990:43). A shadow may be far less substantial than a substance, yet both shadow and substance concern the very same essence. This needs to be properly grasped if Lewis is to be given a fair unprejudiced hearing by evangelicals. Lewis, as I intend to explain in this chapter, tended to work from the *shadows* and arrive at the *substance* rather than the teacher of dogmatics who will work from substantial revelation i.e. the

declaration of the Word of God and then proceed to the resulting consequences thereof. Lewis points out in his writings four of these lower *streams* of revelation, or to offer a different metaphor, four *shadows* of Divinity and the supernatural realm. Lewis, who never saw himself as an official catechiser in the Church (*Fern Seeds and Elephants* 1989:105), contented himself with pointing out the *streams* that proceed from the *Divine fountain*. These four *shadows* of Divinity are,

1. The enigma of rational thought
2. The enigma of the *Categorical Imperative*
3. The universality of a religious instinct in humanity
4. The universal lure of *Sehnsucht*.

1.5.1 **THE ENIGMA OF RATIONAL THOUGHT**

In 1947, when Lewis published his apologetic work *Miracles*, the prevailing intellectual world-view of the day was materialistic Naturalism. This is to be recognised in a number of the corresponding philosophical schools in vogue at that time (i.e. Marxism, Logical Positivism, and Behaviourism). Lewis considered Naturalism to be an irrational and self-refuting world-view, and in this book, he sought to address and challenge its presuppositions. The third chapter in the book *Miracles* entitled *The Cardinal Difficulty of Naturalism* (1990:16), has since its original

publication, been rewritten and expanded upon by Lewis. This chapter, in my own opinion, presents irrefutable evidence for the existence of the supernatural. Although Lewis had used the following argument in a number of articles and speeches prior to the book's publication, it is in this particular work that his position against Naturalism and his case for the supernatural is most lucid.

Lewis begins his argument by defining the Naturalist position. This is absolutely necessary in order for him later to place the terms *natural* and *supernatural* in a polarising opposition to each other. He writes (1990:16),

By Naturalism we mean the doctrine that only nature - the whole interlocked system - exists. And if that were true, every thing and event would, if we knew enough, be explicable without remainder as a necessary product of the system. The whole system being what it is, it ought to be a contradiction in terms if you were not reading this book at the moment; and, conversely, the only cause why you are reading it ought to be that the whole system, at such and such a place and hour, was bound to take that course.

The point that Lewis is making here is that if Naturalism is indeed true, that all existence is made up as a closed and interlocking system, if so then it follows that in the final analysis, every single event must, and cannot otherwise take place, without all events existing as an *effect* of some *cause*, and as the *cause* of some other *effect*. Existence, to the Naturalist, is to view the *cosmos* as a chain of events - every link in the chain owes its being to the system as a whole. This of course means that

even the seemingly free and random act of reading a book has to by absolute necessity, be the result of some interlocking causation. The question 'why?' addressed to a Naturalist is always answered 'because', within the context of *cause* and *effect*. This philosophy is indeed widely held by many not only in philosophical circles, but also by general popular consensus. The claim of Naturalism must not be misunderstood. The fact that the *physical universe* seems, by scientific observation, to be a closed interlocking system of cause and effect is not disputed at all by Lewis. He raises the question however, 'does *all reality in its entirety* fall within this closed and interlocking system of cause and effect?' The Naturalist would answer this question in the affirmative. This position obviously regards human personality and freedom of choice as purely illusory. Everything is determined - from atoms to authors. Blanchard writes (2000:152),

It is easy to see why Materialism and Determinism go together. If the universe came into being by a process of spontaneous generation, if there was, and is, no transcendent, independent, purposive power acting on it, what we have is a closed, mechanistic universe, which is totally predictable. What is more, if we can get a scientific grasp of the make-up of its constituent parts, and work out their relationship to each other, we can describe how the universe will behave. This was one of the strands in Marx's thinking. As a dialectical materialist he rejected the traditional approach to the supernatural and believed that metaphysical ideas arose from the material world.

It needs to be therefore asked. Does everything - including human personality and thought - really fit into Naturalism's interlocking cause and

effect scenario? Lewis answers a resounding ‘no!’ Rational thought can not be attributed to causation in the same sense as a falling domino piece. What cause can possibly be attributed to an inference? This he aptly demonstrates (1990:19).

The easiest way of exhibiting this is to notice the two senses of the word *because*. We can say, ‘Grandfather is ill *because* he ate lobster yesterday.’ We can also say, ‘Grandfather must be ill because he hasn’t got up yet (and we know that he is an invariably early riser when he is well.)’ In the first sense, *because* indicates the relation between cause and effect: the eating made him ill. In the second, it indicates the relation of what logicians call Ground and Consequent. The old man’s late rising is not the cause of his disorder, but the reason why we believe him to be disordered. There is a similar difference between, ‘He cried out *because* it hurt him.’ (Cause and Effect) and ‘It must have hurt him *because* he cried out.’ (Ground and Consequent). We are especially familiar with the Ground and Consequent *because* in mathematical reasoning.

This distinction between the relation of Cause and Effect and that of Ground and Consequence is a distinction that upon consideration can never be compatible. Logical reasoning does not fit into the Naturalist’s closed and interlocking system where every effect can be traced back to a corresponding cause. What could, in the Cause Effect scenario, possibly be the causation of a *correctly drawn logical conclusion*? Lewis continues (1990:20),

Every event in Nature must be connected with previous events in the Cause and Effect relation. But our acts of thinking are events. Therefore the true answer to, ‘why do you think this?’ must begin with the Cause Effect *because*. Unless our

conclusion is the logical consequent from a ground it will be worthless and could only be true by fluke. Unless it is the effect of a cause it cannot occur at all. It looks therefore, that in order for a train of thought to have any value, these two systems of connection must apply simultaneously to the same series of mental acts. But unfortunately the two systems are wholly distinct. To be caused is not to be proved. Wishful thinking, prejudices and the delusions of madness are all caused, but they are ungrounded.

Lewis' argument can be made clearer if it is reduced to a syllogistic tablatore.

PREMISE 1. In Naturalism, every event can be traced back to a cause.

PREMISE 2. Logical reasoning is an event.

CONCLUSION. Logical reasoning fits into the interlocking closed system of Cause and Effect.

Secondly, Lewis argues that the above conclusion presents a problem.

PREMISE 1. Unless a conclusion drawn is the logical consequence of a Ground it is a completely worthless conclusion.

PREMISE 2. Unless a conclusion is the effect of a cause it cannot exist at all.

CONCLUSION. For a train of thought to have any value at all it must be verified by BOTH the Cause - Effect system AS WELL AS the Ground - Consequent system.

It is here however that the Naturalist argument begins to fall apart.

PREMISE 1. In order for a thought to be valid in a closed system of cause and effect, BOTH the Cause Effect system, as well as the Ground Consequent system must apply to it positively.

PREMISE 2. This is not the case - as proven by the deluded madman or the prejudiced misapprehension.

CONCLUSION. In a closed system of cause and effect, Ground Consequent rationality cannot be validated.

We are left with the conclusion that if reasoning is, As the Naturalists maintain, merely a product of the mindless, closed and inter-locking cosmos, then Ground - Consequent reasoning must be ruled out. A thought is merely an event, taking place in a cosmic chain of cause and effect. Whether a thought is *correct* or *incorrect* is a meaningless consideration. The Naturalist rules out Rational thought. If this is so, however, then the very theory of Naturalism is reduced to meaninglessness! Lewis writes (Screwtape proposes a Toast 1998:58),

If minds are wholly dependent on brains, and brains on biochemistry, and biochemistry in the long run on the meaningless flux of atoms, I cannot understand how the thought of those minds can have any more significance than the sound of the wind in the trees. And this to me is the final test.

He concludes his argument in this way (Miracles 1990:29),

If our argument has been sound, acts of reasoning are not interlocked with the total interlocking system of Nature as all its other items are interlocked with one another. They are connected with it in a different way; as the understanding of a

machine is certainly connected with the machine but not in the way the parts of the machine are connected with each other. The knowledge of a thing is not one of the thing's parts. In this sense, something beyond nature operates whenever we reason.

The above argument is one that has received no serious rebuff and I am convinced that there is no way that the argument can be refuted. In 1948 Oxford philosopher, Elizabeth Anscombe publicly debated Lewis on the terminology that he had employed in the establishing his contentions, and in the ensuing debate, her points were vindicated (Sayer 1997:308), Anscombe however came nowhere near to demolishing his argument (Walker 1998:14). Lewis later rectified his misuse of philosophical terminology and re-worked his third chapter for the later editions of *Miracles*. Professor Basil Mitchel (Walker 1998:12), a one time associate of Lewis and until recently, in the chair of philosophy at Oxford University, claimed that Lewis' argument against Naturalism, although unpretentious on philosophical terminology, is perfectly sound in all its premises (although not very popular!).

If it is to be admitted that the natural realm does not, and cannot explain the enigma of reason, then it is not in the least unreasonable to consider rationality as being something *outside* of the natural order of things - something *supernatural*. This suggestion need not now be regarded as something occultic or mystical. Lewis suggests that it is already accepted

in our Post-Einstein universe, that unpredictable motions of the sub-atomic, suggest a *sub-natural* reality that operates somehow differently from nature's Cause and Effect system. If there is the possibility of a *sub-natural* reality, there need be no intelligent reason for ruling out the *supernatural* (Miracles 1990:23). Lewis is suggesting that the supernatural is a lot closer to human experience than most people ever seriously consider. The very act of thinking rationally is, in a sense, a supernatural event! Lewis writes in his address *De Futilitate (Christian Reflections 1991:89)*, '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.'

The reality of the supernatural realm is, to Lewis, proven every time a human being thinks rationally.

Lewis Writings that deal especially with this subject

- i) Lewis' 1947 book, *Miracles*, deals with the enigma of rationality in the first five chapters.
- ii) The following shorter works deal especially with this subject:
Bulverism. This paper is found in the volume, *First and Second Things*.
De Futilitate. This paper is found in the volume, *Christian Reflections*.
Dogma and the Universe. This paper is found in the volume, *God in the Dock*.
Is Theology Poetry? This paper is to be found in the volume, *Screwtape Proposes a Toast*.
Religion without Dogma? This paper is found in the volume, *Timeless at Heart*.

1.5.2 THE ENIGMA OF THE CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVE

Immanuel Kant (1725 - 1805), in his work, *The Critique of Practical Reason*, coined the above term *Categorical Imperative*. The term is self-explanatory. It refers to the human experience of an inner compulsion that compels one to submit to, and abide by definite values and behavior patterns, hence the word *imperative*. This inner conviction is chronologically as well as contextually unchanging as well as universally applicable in its compelling, hence, the word *categorical*. Kant writes (Translation by Bubner 1997:32),

The practical rule is always a product of reason, because it prescribes action as a means to an effect to which is its purpose. This rule, however, is an imperative for a being whose reason is not the sole determinant of the will. It is a rule characterised by an 'ought', which expresses the objective necessitation of the act and indicates that, if reason completely determined the will, the action would without exception take place according to the rule.

It is the categorical imperative that Lewis often pointed to as yet another indication of supernatural reality. In his famous *Broadcast Talks*, now published in a single volume entitled *Mere Christianity* (1989:16), Lewis explained Kant's *Categorical Imperative* on a popular level. He refers to it as the *Law of Human Nature*.

Each man is at every moment subjected to several different sets of law but there is only one of these that he is free to disobey. As a body, he is subject to gravitation and cannot disobey it; if you leave him unsupported in mid-air, he has

no more choice about falling than a stone has. As an organism, he is subjected to various biological laws, which he cannot disobey any more than an animal can. That is, he cannot disobey those laws which he shares with other things; but the law which is peculiar to his human nature, the law that he does not share with animals or vegetables or inorganic things, is the one he can disobey if he chooses.

In his 1943 work *The Abolition of Man* (which had their origin as a series of lectures in 1943 at Durham University) Lewis supplies an appendix to the book that renders an impressive list of moral precepts that had been taken from various and differing cultures and time frames. This was done in order to certify his claim that the moral drive within humanity is indeed categorical and universal. It can be clearly seen in this appendix, that theft, adultery, murder, and deception are universally frowned upon, whereas mercy, gratitude, and faithfulness have been condoned and approved of since time immemorial. Lewis in this book calls what he had previously termed the *Law of Human Nature* in his *Broadcast Talks*, the *Tao*. This he did to indicate that ethics and morality were not confined exclusively to the Christian religion, or even to Western Civilisation. The term *Tao* comes from the Chinese teacher *Lao-Tse* (c 604 B.C.), the founder of Taoism. Lewis writes (*Abolition of Man* 1978:14),

The Chinese also speak of a great thing (the greatest thing) called the *Tao*. It is the reality beyond all predicates, the abyss that was before the Creator Himself. It is Nature; it is the Way, the Road. It is the way in which the universe goes on, the Way in which things everlastingly emerge, stilly and tranquilly, into space and

time. It is also the way in which every man should tread in imitation of that cosmic and super cosmic progression, conforming all activities to that great exemplar.

Lewis' *Law of Human Nature*, or *Tao*, is revealed by him to be an indication of a reality existing outside of the natural system of Cause and Effect. In other words, Lewis argued that the human awareness of 'right' and 'wrong' human behavior exposed a supernatural reality.

Immanuel Kant had previously made this his own argument for the existence of a Supreme Being. After Kant had successfully demolished all previous philosophical 'proofs' of God by constructing his *Noumenal Barrier* in his great work, *Critique of Pure Reason*, he went on, in a following publication, *Critique of Practical Reason*, to establish a proof for God's existence based on the human moral impulse, or, *Categorical Imperative*. Kant writes (Bubner 1997:46),

Now this principle of morality, on account of the universality of its legislation which makes it the formal supreme determining ground of the will regardless of any subjective differences among men, is declared by reason to be a law for all rational beings in so far as they have a will i.e. faculty of determining their causality through the representation of a rule, and consequently in so far as they are competent to determine their actions according to principles and thus to act according to practical a priori principles, which alone have the necessity which reason demands in a principle. It is thus not limited to human beings but extends to all finite beings having reason and will; indeed it includes the Infinite Being as the supreme intelligence.

Lewis, with his native gift for clarity in profound matters, made use of Kant's argument (*A Pilgrim's Regress* 1990:165), but tailored it to a more general comprehension. His particular approach is as follows. In his work *The Abolition of Man*, he assumed that all his readers accepted the fact that moral imperative was a reality, but he was also aware that the mere consciousness of this fact would not of itself prove anything at all. A person may well accept the fact that moral imperative exists and even accept that it exists universally and categorically, but surely this human experience could be explained on purely Naturalistic grounds. Could the Imperative not be understood as merely being an inbred *higher instinct*, a highly evolved impulse for survival - an instinct necessary for a gregarious animal like *Homo Sapiens*? Could not the Jungian concept of *Collective Unconscious* account for moralities' categorical nature? It is here that Lewis' clarity of argument can settle the uncertainty. Can the Moral impulse be explained in Naturalistic terms? Lewis would answer 'no.' He writes in the second chapter of *The Abolition of Man* (1978:24),

In what way does Instinct thus conceived, help us to find 'real' values? Is it maintained that *we must* obey Instinct, that we cannot do otherwise? But if so, why are *Green Books* (the book under discussion) and the like written? Why this stream of exhortation to drive us where we cannot help going? Why such praise for those who have submitted to the inevitable? Or is it maintained that if we obey Instinct, we shall be happy and satisfied? But the very question that we were considering was that of facing death which cuts off every possible satisfaction: and if we have an instinctive desire for the good of posterity, then that desire, by very nature of the case, can never be satisfied, since its aim is achieved, if at all,

when we are dead. It looks very much as if we ought to say not that we must obey Instinct, nor that it would satisfy us to do so, but we *ought* to obey it.

As Lewis so eloquently observes, we are ultimately pushed back to an 'ought'. But if this is the case, we face an enigma. There is nothing in the realm of a closed and interlocked Naturalist system that is able to account for or explain from whence this moral imperative originates. No physical, psychological, or sociological cause can be discovered that is able to adequately account for its presence within human consciousness. Here again one is logically compelled to consider the following question; if a universal human impulse exists that cannot be accounted for by the natural phenomena, could this not at least suggest that its causation comes from outside of the natural, i.e. the supernatural? Lewis would strongly affirm this.

Lewis writings that especially deal with this subject

- i) The 1943 book, *The Abolition of Man*, originally presented as a series of three university lectures, contains, undoubtedly the fullest argument on this subject.
- ii) *The Broadcast Talks*, now combined into the volume entitled, *Mere Christianity*, devotes the first section of the book to this topic.
- iii) The introduction to the 1940 volume, *The Problem of Pain* deals largely with the subject.
- iv) The fifth chapter in the 1947 book entitled *Miracles*, contains this argument.
- v) Shorter Lewis works in which the subject of the *Categorical Imperative* is discussed are as follows:
On Ethics. This paper is found in the volume, *Christian Reflections*.
The Poison of Subjectivity. This paper is found in the volume, *Christian Reflections*.
The Humanitarian Theory of Punishment. This paper is found in the volume entitled, *First and Second Things*.

1.5.3 THE UNIVERSALITY OF A RELIGIOUS INSTINCT IN HUMANITY

It is an undisputed fact in most disciplines of learning that the phenomenon of experienced emotional stimulus is an objectively discernible reality. What I mean by this is that emotion is able to be observed, studied, and communicated scientifically by the discipline of psychology, especially a psychology that is in antithesis to the Behaviorist approach (Meyer, Salmon 1988:130). Human emotions such as anger, fear, and regret are not merely dismissed as being merely emissions of brain activity (Palmer 1995:129), but as objective and definable entities in themselves, entities that warrant serious observation. My reason for mentioning this is that I need to firmly establish a foundation on which to present Lewis' third pointer to the supernatural. Meyer and Salmon in their popular college psychology text book, *Abnormal Psychology*, explain how psychologists approach non-material mental activity scientifically (1988:28),

In the modern scientific method, initial insights and general ideas (hypotheses) eventually lead to experiments that help to generate full-blown models or paradigms of human behavior...Thus, the following sequence: general ideas or insights; observations; hypothesis; operational definition; experiment; model or paradigm; new hypotheses; further experiments; new model or paradigm.

The disciplined study of human behavior inevitably involves the pre-supposition that human subjective experience is both real and observable. If this were not the case, psychology would be a discipline confined to the field of behavioral and sociological examination. The point that I wish to press home here becomes relevant to our present discussion when we realise that it is possible for a subjective feeling felt, to be seriously

considered as an argument for the supernatural (McCallum 1996:66). No subjective emotion experienced can be scientifically studied in the same way that a physical object can. Anger or grief cannot be examined in a test tube. In fact, the physical manifestations that accompany much emotional activity (i.e. perspiration, trembling, increased heartbeat) can be manifestations of a number of different and conflicting emotions. For example, a 'fluttering in the diaphragm' could indicate that a feeling of fear is stimulating the physical response, but it could just as well indicate the experience of a positive and joyous excitement. This proves that when a psychologist considers emotional phenomena, he is accepting emotion *per se* (i.e. *psychical* phenomena) as a *bona fide* observable reality.

Lewis, in many of his works, alludes to the fact that throughout recorded history, humanity has been prone to religion and religious activity which always appears to have been motivated by a sense of numinous wonder and mystery. He writes in the introduction to his 1940 book *The Problem of Pain* (1990:14),

Now nothing is more certain than that man, from a very early period, began to believe that the universe was haunted by spirits. Professor Otto perhaps assumes too easily that from the very first, such spirits were regarded with numinous awe. This is impossible to prove for the very good reason that utterances expressing awe of the numinous and utterances expressing mere fear of danger may use identical language - as we can still say we are 'afraid' of a ghost or 'afraid' of a rise in prices. It is therefore theoretically possible when there was a time when men regarded these spirits simply as dangerous and felt

towards them just as they felt towards tigers. What is certain, is that now, at any rate, the numinous experience exists and that if we start from ourselves we can trace it a long way back.

The human experience of the numinous that Lewis is referring to above, is the universally attested to sense of wonder, adoration and *otherness* felt in the experience and consideration of life's mystery and profundity. Lewis usually terms this experience *awe*. He says in the same passage (1990:15),

A modern example may be found (if you are not too proud to seek it there) in *The Wind in the Willows*, where Rat and Mole approach Pan on the island. 'Rat,' he found breath to whisper, shaking, 'Are you afraid?' 'Afraid?' murmured the rat, his eyes shining with unutterable love, 'Afraid? Of him? O never, never. And yet - and yet - O Mole, I am afraid.' ...Going back further, we get a very pure and strong example in Malory, when Galahad began to 'tremble right hard and when the mortal flesh began to behold the spiritual things.' At the beginning of our era, it finds expression in the Apocalypse where the writer fell at the feet of the risen Christ 'as if dead.'

The experience of the numinous or, *awe*, as Lewis called it, proves to be something of an enigma (Hodge 1991:30). If considered from a purely naturalistic, *cause - effect* epistemology, it has to be asked, 'What is the cause, the stimulus, the motivator, *behind* this experience?' A Naturalist may contend that because the above experience is attested to by the evidence presented from all cultures and ages without exception

(Tilgheman 1994:24), it must find its source within our species' evolutionary development. This would suggest then, that we are to consider the universality of the experience to be explained by the *collective unconscious*, inbred over eons of time into the human psyche. But can this be considered a satisfactory answer? Lewis continues in his introduction (*The Problem of Pain* 1990:16),

Most attempt to explain the Numinous presuppose the thing to be explained - as when anthropologists derive it from the fear of the dead, without explaining why dead men (assuredly the least dangerous kind of men) should have attracted this peculiar feeling. Against all such attempts we must insist that dread and awe are in a different dimension from fear. They are in the nature of an interpretation a man gives to the universe, or an impression he gets from it; and just as no enumeration of the physical qualities of a beautiful object could ever include its beauty, or give the faintest hint of what we mean by beauty to a creature without aesthetic experience, so no factual description of any human environment could include the uncanny and the Numinous or even hint at them.

One cannot in other words, label *awe* as merely a relative, or a development of the emotion we know as *fear*. Lewis argues here that numinous *awe* is unlike the emotion of fear in both its source and its motivation. We know that emotions can be recognised and distinguished by psychologists. One distinguishes for example, between the emotion of anger and the emotion of fear by the *causation* of the impact felt, and the *response* that this impact motivates one to.

- ◆ Fear has its *causation* in the encounter or anticipation of some danger, and the *response* to its causation will be a defensive reaction, which includes the attending physical phenomena (i.e. trembling, increased heartbeat, adrenaline inflow).

- ◆ Anger has its *causation* in the experience or anticipation of some offense, and the *response* to its causation will be an aggressive reaction, which will include the attending physical phenomena (i.e. violent outburst).

If one is able to distinguish between emotions, then it is clear, by the use of the above example, that the universal awe of the numinous that Lewis is referring to, can be clearly distinguished from the emotion of fear in both its *causation* as well as its *response*. It seems indisputable that numinous awe is a *bona fide* emotion experienced, and experienced universally. If this is so however, then we need to account for the enigma. What *object* does this awe correspond to? Lewis would argue that this numinous awe is a response to the experience of the supernatural. This cannot be avoided - especially if no other possible causation can account for its universal and continuing existence. Jacques Sys, in his article found in the book, *Rumors of Heaven* (1998:187), encapsulates the spirit of Lewis' argument. 'Behind the words of the letter, in the spirit of the letter, what is

discovered is not, as we have seen, a system, but a 'fact' or 'thing' about which one is expected to exclaim 'Look out! Its alive!'

1.5.4 THE UNIVERSAL LURE OF SEHNSUCHT

The famous words of Augustine of Hippo (354 - 430) summarise aptly this particular stream of Lewisian evidence for the supernatural. Augustine writes in the opening page of this *Confessions* (Translation by Pusey 1936:3), 'Thou awakest us to delight in thy praise; Thou madest us for Thyself, and our heart is restless until it repose in Thee.' Lewis scholar, Michael Christensen, describes our topic thus (1979:77), '*Sehnsucht* is that mysterious something we all want, we all grasp at, in the first moment of longing, which just fades away in the reality.' Lewis describes *Sehnsucht* as follows (The Problem of Pain 1990:117),

There have been times when I think that we do not desire Heaven; but more often I find myself wondering whether, in our heart of hearts, we have ever

Lewis writings that especially deal with this subject

- i) The introduction to the 1940 book, *The Problem of Pain* deals to a large extent with this subject.
- ii) The final chapter of Lewis' 1955 autobiography, *Surprised by Joy*, entitled *The Beginning*, relates Lewis' own personal experience on this subject.
- iii) The following shorter works of Lewis cover the subject of the human experience religious Awe:
Historicism. This paper, originally delivered at a public debate, is to be found in the volume, *Fern Seeds and Elephants*.
Religion Without Dogma? This paper can be found in the volume entitled, *Timeless at Heart*.

desired anything else. You may have noticed that the books we love are bound together by a secret thread...Again, you may have stood before some landscape, which seems to embody what you have been looking for all your life...Even in your hobbies, has there not always been some secret attraction which others are curiously ignorant of - something not to be identified with, but always on the verge of breaking through, the smell of cut wood in the workshop or the clap-clap of water against the boat's side...You have never *had* it. All the things that have ever deeply possessed your soul have been but hints of it - tantalising glimpses, promises never quite fulfilled, echoes that died away just as they caught your ear.

This experience of an *inner longing* for something quite indefinable often is mistaken for the tangible presentation of the vehicle that it is experienced in. For example, the proverbial search for fame and fortune, the lure of adventure, sexual and romantic desire, all may somehow 'reflect' or 'suggest' and be mistaken for, this inexpressible longing. After the particular object that represents the longing is pursued, attained, and realised however, the fulfillment that was hoped for is not enjoyed. The searcher is then left frustrated, and goes off seeking this mysterious fulfillment in the next object that suggests that 'something'. The reason for the elusive nature of this desire is that it is in reality, the innate human desire for Divinity. Lewis explains this later in the same passage (1990:117),

Be sure that the 'ins' and 'outs' of your individuality are no mystery to Him; and one day they will no longer be a mystery to you. The mould in which a key is made would be a strange thing, if you had never seen a key: and a key itself, a

strange thing if you had never seen a lock. Your soul has a curious shape because it is a hollow made to fit a particular swelling in the infinite contours of the Divine substance.

Lewis wrote his first Christian book on this very topic. In this 1934 work, *A Pilgrim's Regress*, he attempts to express this search for the inexpressible, and how it may be confused with the objects that reflect or suggest it. Although Lewis claimed that the book was not to be read as an allegorical autobiography (*A Pilgrim's Regress* 1990:21), he does admit that the quest carried out in the book by the character, John, resembles his own search and discovery of personal meaning and fulfillment. John, in the book, like John Bunyan's *Christian* in the famous allegory that Lewis based his story's structure on, goes off on a quest in search of a mysterious island that he has somehow learned of in his meditations. His desire to attain this island drives him from place to place in pursuit of it. Each place that John stops at represents, in an allegorical fashion, a certain object that is mistaken for the realisation of the desired island. In the book, John samples sexual desire, aesthetic pleasure, material comfort, culture and learning, and philosophical understanding. With the experience of each of these in turn, John realises that it is not what he was seeking when he desired the island. John finally faces the fact that the island is something that he had known intuitively all of his life - it was Divinity (in the book, God is referred to as the Landlord), and can only be attained through the acquiescence to the teaching of Mother Kirk (i.e. the

Church). Lewis puts these words into John's mouth as a question to a man who teaches him this truth, *Father History* (1990:192), 'But what is it Father (i.e. the island)? And has it anything to do with the Landlord? I do not know how to fit these things together.' Father History answers John in this way, 'It (i.e. the island) comes from the Landlord. We know this by its results. It has brought you to where you now are: and nothing leads back to him which did not at first proceed from him.'

The lure of *Sehnsucht*, Lewis maintained, is something universal (*The Pilgrim's Regress* 1990:12). The very fact that such an inexplicable desire exists at all, that humanity longs for something that the present world cannot truly satisfy, is, to Lewis, an evidence of supernatural reality (*God in the Dock* 1990:35). 'Every desire demands an object', Lewis argues. Just as hunger corresponds to food, *Sehnsucht* must correspond to something. In his 1955 autobiography, *Surprised by Joy*, Lewis describes his entire pre-Christian life as its being a panting after and hungering for, this illusive 'something', which he in this book terms, joy (1971:190). The most sublime passage, I feel, that Lewis ever wrote on this topic, is found in the concluding chapter of his 1960 book, *The Four Loves* (1977:127),

We were made for God. Only by being in some respect like Him, only by being a manifestation of His beauty, loving-kindness, wisdom or goodness, has any earthly beloved excited our love. It is not that we loved them too much, but that we did not quite understand what we are loving. It is not that we shall be asked to turn from them, so dearly familiar, to a Stranger. When we see the face of God

we shall know that we have always known it. He has been a party to, has made, sustained, and moved moment by moment within, all our earthly experiences of innocent love.

Lewis' writings that especially deal with this subject

- i) The 1934 allegory, *The Pilgrim's Regress*, is devoted entirely to the topic of *Sehnsucht*.
- ii) The 1955 biography, *Surprised by Joy*, employs *Sehnsucht* as the interwoven essence that motivated his own pre-Christian development.
- iii) Lewis' *Broadcast Talks*, that were later combined into the volume, *Mere Christianity*, deals with this topic in the last chapter of the third part of the book, *The New Men*.
- iv) The 1940 apologetic work, *The Problem of Pain*, contains a chapter that deals especially with this subject. It is entitled, *Heaven*.
- v) The final chapter of the 1960 book, *The Four Loves*, explains how *Sehnsucht* is finally realised in the experience of Divinity.
- vi) Lewis wrote an address entitled, *The Weight of Glory*, which deals with the ultimate fulfillment of all human aspiration in Heaven. This address is found in the compilation of shorter Lewis writings entitled, *Screwtape Proposes a Toast*.

1.5.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

It was these four above mentioned ‘*shadows*’ that constituted for Lewis a reasonable argument in favor of the reality of the supernatural realm. It needs to be realised here, that these four ‘*shadows*’, the enigma of rationality, the enigma of the *Categorical Imperative*, the universal spiritual drive in humanity, and the universality of *Sehnsucht*, are pointed out by Lewis to be considered, not as a conclusive ‘*proof*’ for his argument for God’s existence, but rather, *united together*, they serve as an imposing witness for the evidence of supernatural reality. Although the above witnesses for the case in support of the supernatural are not in themselves to be considered as finally conclusive evidence for the supernatural, they cannot be simply dismissed without reasonable consideration. It needs to be remembered that Lewis’ argument is no less vindicated by convincing evidence than the post-modern world-view is. Both these positions equally base their epistemological assumptions upon evidence that is forensically sufficient, yet not absolutely conclusive in nature. In his pointing out the above four ‘*streams*’, Lewis intended primarily to supply a reasonable foundation on which to intelligently ground the Christian faith, and that he realised full well that anything beyond this point was a matter of Sovereign Grace in revelation (see *Miracles* Chapter one 1990:7).

1.6 THE RATIONALITY OF C. S. LEWIS

It is clearly evident in all of Lewis' apologetic writings that his communication of the Christian message (even in the underlying intentions of his mythologies), was approached rationally (Schakel 1984:108). Lewis argued his apologetic contentions with the use of the tools of logic. Inference, inductive reasoning, and syllogistic deduction, are his most commonly used tools for this end (Peters 1998:140). This was certainly no co-incidence. Lewis' apologetics are based upon a foundational assumption. He assumed that his readers stood in the same paradigm as he himself was standing as the writer. In other words, he took it for granted that the arguments that he brought forward in his declaration of Christian truth would be able to be received, understood and objectively examined by his reader (*An Experiment in Criticism* 1992:104).

Lewis was certainly not ignorant of the naturalist conception (reinforced by Freud), of the human conscious mind being something comparable to an *iceberg tip*, where the existential experience of consciousness lay on top of layers of underlying neural, environmental, and psychological conditioning (Meyer and Salmon 1988:126). This was not in the least a hindrance to his concept of the human mind, even if proven true, and was not able to undermine the ontological significance of human reasoning. An illuminating article was written on this subject, *Behind the Scenes*

(*Christian Reunion and other Essays* 1990:95). Lewis here compares the human mind to a stage production. On the stage there are two realities, one reality is the *stage* presented to the audience, the other reality is that *behind the scenes*. It is of little significance to the play that is enjoyed by the audience, he reasoned, who, what, or how, the workings *behind the scenes* functioned and supported the stage presentation. All of the many props, stagehands, and light switches that functioned behind the scenes, existed for one main purpose - to culminate in the presentation enjoyed by the audience on the stage. This illustration he applied to the human mind. He writes (1990:101),

The parallel is fairly exact. The complex, worming its way along in the unimaginable Unconscious, and then suddenly transforming itself (and gaining admission only by that transmission) as it steps into the only 'mind' I can ever directly know, is really very like the actor, with his own unhistrionic expression, and walking along that bare, draughty 'off stage' and then suddenly appearing as Mr. Darling in the nursery or Aladdin in his cave.

It is because of the above understanding of human consciousness, that Lewis makes absolutely no apology for his rational approach to apologetics. Rationality to Lewis was something absolutely resonant in itself - something objective of human awareness. This meant that he had little time for those (i.e. Hegelian Idealists) who considered rationality as something that is unfolding parallel with human consciousness. In his paper, *Dogma and the Universe (God in the Dock* 1990:35) he writes,

Change is not progress unless the core remains unchanged. A small oak grows into a big oak; if it became a beech, that would not be a growth, but mere change...There is a great difference between counting apples and arriving at the mathematical formulae of modern physics. But the multiplication table is used in both and does not grow out of date. In other words, wherever there is real progress in knowledge, there is some knowledge that is not superseded. Indeed, the very possibility of progress demands that there should be an unchanging element.

This however does not mean that he considered rationality to be the one and only apologetic approach. Lewis was not averse to mysticism, but he never appealed to this approach himself in any of his Christian writings. This was not because he considered mysticism to be invalid or irrelevant to apologetics. Lewis writes (*Prayer Letters to Malcolm* 1977:65), 'You and I are people of the foothills. In the happy days when I was still a walker I loved the hills, and even mountain walks, but I was no climber, I hadn't the head. So now, I do not attempt the precipices of mysticism.' He considered this particular approach to the Christian realities to be beyond his own abilities to utilise effectively, and also too advanced and out of reach of his average reader to comprehend - readers whom, he felt, needed to be challenged by the simple claims of the Gospel message. To Lewis, therefore, spirituality was best approached and communicated by means of rationality. Not only had he himself come to his own religious convictions through this means (*Surprised by Joy* 1971:109, Schakel

1984:89), but also, he perceived rationality to be a very essence in which the universe itself was saturated (*Christian Reflections* 1991:96).

It is on this very issue, however, that Lewis parts company with a vast body of contemporary academic Christian thinking. Christian academia, as with all of the disciplines in the study of humanities, strives to keep abreast of academic thinking in general (Taylor 1984:105). If theology is to be considered a legitimate academic discipline, then it is believed that it must be connected with, and relevant to the other sister disciplines within the humanities. Sociology, Psychology, Philosophy, Anthropology, etc. all need to be integrated in order to establish a harmonious and consistent body of human thought (Taylor 1984:107, Lyotard 1984:47). What this means, therefore, is that, if theology is to be considered as being legitimate and relevant to disciplined human thought, it needs to consider the claims of its sister disciplines as being an integral part of itself. An example of this may be useful in order to clarify the point. If an assumption is to be made in any discipline within the humanities department, it ought to be made in harmony with, and in liaison with the other humanity disciplines in order to maintain consensus. In theology, discussion on the topic of *sin* for example, should, in academia, take into considerations the related findings and theories of the sister disciplines on the same subject (McCallum 1996:114). What does Psychology say on the topic of sin for example, or Sociology? Or Anthropology? Academic theology, in other

words, tends to move along the same lines, and hold the same assumptions, as its sister disciplines. With this consideration in mind, it will not be difficult to recognise why Lewisian apologetics are not readily accepted in many contemporary academic theological circles.

The rational approach to the apologetics of confessional Christianity is rarely seriously considered by contemporary academic theologians. The nature of this reluctance to rationally establish Christian kerugma is grounded in a pre-established suspicion of any rationality that is used to establish something that is metaphysical.

Although there are a number of roots to this assumption in academia, a generally acknowledged catalyst that effected the shift from a rational base in apologetics to a metaphysical skepticism, was the Eighteenth century philosopher, Immanuel Kant (1725 - 1805). In his work, *A Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant offered a synthesis for the paradox caused by the two epistemologies, *Rationalism* and *Empiricism* (Bencivenga 1987:85). Kant suggested that these two seemingly opposing positions might both be considered as being correct interpretations of human consciousness at the same time, as long as a *third fact* is introduced into the dilemma. This fact being, that the human ability to absorb information that is then conditioned into knowledge, is made possible because of an innate 'filter' that is located in the mind, which processes sense experience into human

knowledge and awareness (Kraft 1992:396). This inbuilt conditioner, he termed, the innate *Categories*. On the positive side, this new insight resolved the pressing Eighteenth century dilemma of epistemology, but on the negative side; it resulted in a strengthened and reasonable skepticism towards comprehending anything outside of phenomena. If, as Kant had argued, all human awareness is ultimately a matter of subjective activity, of sense experience being filtered through the innate categories (Palmer 1996:103), then it is, in the final analysis, impossible for a human being to speak with any objective certainty on matters outside of human consciousness itself. Kant writes (Translation by Bubner 1997:25),

The critique is not opposed to *dogmatic procedure* of reason in its pure knowledge, as science (for it must always be dogmatic), that is, derive its proof from sure principles *a priori*, but to *dogmatism* only, that is, the presumption that it is possible to make any progress with pure (philosophical) knowledge from concepts (from philosophical knowledge) such as reason has long been in the habit of employing, without first enquiring in what way, and by what right it has come to possess them.

What Kant termed, *Das ding an sich* (reality as it is in itself), i.e. the objective reality outside of human subjective awareness, was, because of the human mind's constitution, 'out of bounds' as regards the perception of naked objectivity (Bencivenga 1987:93). Metaphysical knowledge from Kant's time onwards, has been progressively relegated to the realm of *interpretation* (McCallum 1996:34). Nothing metaphysical may be *proven* in the same way that perceived phenomena can be. This resulting

problem resulting from Kant's epistemology is often termed, *The Noumenal Barrier*.

The impact of this epistemological paradigm shift upon the discipline of academic theology has been profound. From the early Nineteenth century, Christian apologetics has largely avoided the rational justification of its *kerugma*, and in an attempt to remain relevant in a sceptical environment, it has tended to veer off in either one of two different directions.

a) **Apologetics that stresses human subjectivity**

If the *Noumenal Barrier* had deprived Christian academia of its objectivity in dogma itself, then a fresh object of study was required in order to maintain its place in the academic community. It was the German theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768 - 1834), who first offered the theological circle a credible shift in emphasis (Murray 2001:4). In his major work, *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, he shifts the emphasis of his apologetic material away from objective dogma, and instead, he concentrates upon the psychological capacity found in human experience towards the concept of Absolute Being. The subjectivity of religion was here stressed in emphasis, and of course, without much

difficulty, it was vindicated. Schleiermacher's work harmonised with the prevailing mindset of that time – Idealism and *Romanticism*.

This emphasis upon the subjective *experience* of the Christian religion attended to in academic theology finds its expression in various ways and, is able to co-exist and inter-act with such recognised academic disciplines as Psychology, Anthropology, Sociology. These fields of study are all able to recognise the validity of the Christian *experience* as being an integral part of, and an object for, the human social sciences and psychological studies (McGrath 1993:187). Major theologians that have championed this approach to apologetics, and have influenced major movements in this direction, are Kierkegaard (1813 - 1855), with his innovative appeal to existential commitment in religion, and Tillich (1886 - 1965). Philosopher Martin Heidegger (1888 - 1976), was appealed to by Rudolf Bultmann (1884 - 1976), in his existential reinterpretation of the Christian message (McGrath 1993:193).

b) Pragmatic Apologetics

The second way in which academic theology has responded to philosophy's denial of the validity of dogmatic objectivity, is to have acquiesced to the prevailing scepticism, and attempted to make a

paradigm shift in the area of the relevance of Christian message. McGrath writes in his important introduction to Christian theology (1993:93),

The theological implications of this shift in direction were considerable. A number of Christian beliefs came to be regarded as seriously out of line with modern cultural norm; these suffered one of two fates:

1 They were *abandoned* as resting upon outdated or mistaken presuppositions. The doctrine of original sin is a case in point; this was put down to a misreading of the New Testament in the light of the writings of St Augustine, whose judgement on those matters had become clouded by his over involvement in the fatalistic sect (the Manichees).

2 They were *reinterpreted*, in a manner more conducive to the spirit of the age. A number of central doctrines relating to the person of Jesus Christ may be included in this category, including His Divinity (which was reinterpreted as an affirmation of Jesus' exemplifying qualities which humanity as a whole could hope to emulate).

This redefining, is something that is seen to be in line with, and subservient to, the pragmatic requirements of society at large. A denial of the supernatural and a resulting reinterpretation of Gospel narrative that is more relevant to the requirements and aspirations of the contemporary agenda typifies this approach. Examples of this approach can be read in the nineteenth century school of *Liberalism* with its *Social Gospel* championed by scholars such as Harnack (1851 - 1930), and Loisy (1857 - 1940). The *Quest for the Historical Jesus* approach championed by Schweitzer (1875 -

1965), also falls into this approach, as well as, more recently, the *Liberation Theology* championed by Gutierrez.

1.6.1 **C. S. LEWIS' RATIONAL APPROACH TO THEOLOGY**

It is interesting to note that the Church of England, at the height of Lewis' success as a writer of Christian apologetics in the 1940's was decidedly liberal in its ethos. This can be verified by a reading of Lewis' paper, *Fern Seeds and Elephants* (1989:104), that was originally given as an address to theology students at Cambridge University. Lewis had little sympathy for the liberal school, and referred to it as Christianity of *theology and water*. In his first Christian book, *A Pilgrims' Regress*, Lewis devotes an entire chapter (a chapter entitled *Tea on the Lawn*, 1990:148) to this liberal type of mindset prevailing the Anglican Church. Here Lewis presents the character *Mr. Broad*, a cultured gentleman who, after waxing eloquently on the *Golden Rule*, has absolutely nothing of value to say on the vital topic of religion to the searching hero of the story. In his 1946 book, *The Great Divorce* (1977:35), Lewis presents in one chapter, a dialogue between two Anglican clergymen who have passed on, and are both standing on the precipice between Heaven and Hell. One clergyman is orthodox whereas the other is a theological liberal, who, in his lifetime, had disbelieved and taught on his doubts concerning the supernatural. In this chapter, the Liberal ends up in Hell! Lewis believed that Christian

orthodoxy was essentially a deposit that had been entrusted to the Church, and therefore, any deviation from its doctrinal fundamentals by the clergy was tantamount to treachery (*First and Second Things* 1985:73). These considerations may explain one reason why Lewis was generally disapproved of by his Christian intellectual peers (Sayer 1997:285). Lewis was aware of the fact that his theological stance was conceived by many to be *Fundamentalist* and reactionary. He writes in *Prayer Letters to Malcolm* (1977:118),

Don't however, misjudge these 'liberal Christians'. They genuinely believe that writers of my sort are doing a great deal of harm. They themselves find it impossible to accept the articles of 'faith once given to the saints'. They are nevertheless, extremely anxious that some vestigial religion which they (not we) can describe as 'Christianity' should continue to exist and make numerous converts. They think that these converts will come in only if this religion is sufficiently 'de-mythologised'. The ship must be lightened if she is to keep afloat. It follows that, to them, the most mischievous people in the world are those who, like myself, proclaim that Christianity essentially involves the supernatural.

There is no serious doubt that Lewis was strongly opposed to Liberal theology in either its objective or its subjective formats. The question therefore comes to the fore, if this is so, how did he refute Liberalism's argument? What, in other words, justified his opposition to this approach to Christian apologetics? The answer to this question is that Lewis held two presuppositions - two foundational assumptions - that, when combined, constitute his argument against Liberalism. These are:

- ◆ The ontological reality of the supernatural realm. This has been established in the previous chapter.
- ◆ The rationality that pervades the natural realm, and its constitutional inter-locking with the supernatural. This will now be discussed in greater detail.

Western thinking, since the time of the great Greek philosophers, has most of the time held the conviction that the human mind is a *microcosm*, and is intricately related to the universe. Every human organ and sense is *fine-tuned* into a harmonious system that culminates in the conscious awareness called the *ego*. This human mind finds itself existing in, and integrally dependent upon, a corresponding *natural* reality that is outside of itself, yet *belonging to* the same system. This universe that the conscious mind finds itself in, is governed by something somehow *over-arching* in dispensation. This *over-arching dispensation* is commonly referred to as the *Cosmos*, or the *Law of Nature*, by which is implied the understanding that the universe in its observable entirety appears to exist as a system of some super-imposed inter-action. The rationale behind this conception is understandable. Repeated and consistent observation reveals each individual segment within this cosmic system, exists and functions systematically and synchronically (the question of the *sub-atomic*, I do not here consider to be part of the observable cosmos. See my previous chapter on *Naturalism*). Further consideration reveals that the

mind of the observer is able to inter-act with the observable *cosmos*, by acts of understanding and predicting its movements. This can only mean that the observer's mind somehow stands in relation to the *cosmos*. What however, is that relationship? Lewis writes in an address entitled *De Fultilitate (Christian Reflections 1991:88)*,

The nature of the universe cannot be alien to reason. We find that matter always obeys the same laws, which our logic obeys. When logic says that a thing must be so, nature always agrees. No one can suppose that this is due to a happy coincidence. A great many people think that it is due to the fact that nature produced the mind. But on the assumption that nature is herself mindless this provides no explanation. To be the result of a series of mindless events is one thing: to be a kind of plan or true account of the laws of which those mindless events happened is quite another. Thus the Gulf Stream produces all sorts of results: for instance the temperature of the Irish Sea. What it does not produce is maps of the Gulf Stream.

It is here reasoned that there is an essential connection between the human mind and the universe that the mind observes. The human mind is able to accurately predict a chemical reaction, the mating patterns of a species of animal, a solar eclipse hundreds of years before the event actually takes place. But how is this possible, and in what way does this relationship exist? Can it be rightly considered that the very event of a human being's cognitive awareness of the universes' movement, is *itself* yet another (similar in kind) event? Lewis answers this question in the negative. A mind that is able to comprehend and predict an event must

obviously be somehow related to its object, yet in a way that has to be distinct from the event itself. Lewis aptly illustrates this essential difference in the fourth chapter of his book *Miracles* (1990:29),

They (i.e. reason and nature) are connected in a different way; as the understanding of a machine is certainly connected with the machine but not in the way that the parts of the machine are connected with each other. The knowledge of a thing is not one of the thing's parts. In this sense, something beyond nature operates whenever we reason.

It is upon this argument's conclusion that Lewis establishes a dualism of *Mind* and *Matter* (although not of the Cartesian understanding). The universe is the unfolding of material, *in* time, *by* energy, *through* space - this much is 'physical' - *yet the universe also is comprehended*. Not only is this comprehension of the universe experienced, but this experience corresponds with yet another, a non-human essence - something that is like unto itself (i.e. something that is related to physicality, and yet is distinguished from it). This essence is also rational, and yet it is not a subjective human rationality. This is *Reason* - or as the Greek philosophers termed it, the *Logos*. Lewis explains this distinction in his allegorical work, *a Pilgrim's Regress*. Here, in a dialogue that takes place between the hero of the story, John, and a sage named *Wisdom*, this is made clear (1990:170),

You learned that there is no color without seeing, no hardness without touching: no body, to say all, save in the minds of those who perceive it. It follows then, that all this choir of Heaven and furniture of earth are imaginations: not your

imagination nor mine, for here we have met in the same world, which could not be if the world were shut up within my mind or yours. Without doubt, then, all this show of sky and earth floats within some mighty imagination.

Lewis held that, far from the universe being mindless and purposeless, it was actually saturated in *Logos* (*Christian Reflections* 1991:89). It was this conviction that motivated him to reject and resist the rational pessimism that is often inherent in the understanding of Immanuel Kant's *Noumenal Barrier*. Lewis insisted upon the reasonableness of proclaiming an objectively presentable and orthodox Christian apologetics.

Lewis' presupposition, namely of a supernatural realm that is pervaded with rationality, coupled with the corresponding human ability to rationalise, bridged for him the chasm of metaphysics. No absurdity existed for him in the idea of a finite human being asking ultimate questions.

A further problem may, at this point, be raised by what has so far been presented. This problem raised responds to the question of the supernatural realm, by focusing on the *limitations of human comprehension*. This question is less profound than the issue of supernaturalism *per se*, but it is no less perplexing. *Where is one to set the limits of human comprehension?* Even if the supernatural realm does indeed exist, as Lewis postulates, as something *essentially real*, and even

if its mere existence is conceivable to a finite understanding, what practical use is this knowledge to the human sciences? It has been argued that the supernatural is something that cannot be communicated to finite beings. The reason for this seems valid. The human psyche consists of a self-awareness that may be accounted for by physical causality. The five physical senses, filtered through what Kant termed, *Conceptual Categories* (Bubner 1997:27), such as time, space, mood and texture etc. are *programmed* into the mind by sentient and environmental consciousness, and there retained by the memory, being systematised into thought patterns by language (McCallum 1996:26). This, the human individual experiences as, and refers to as, '*my mind*'. If this serves as an adequate explanation of what constitutes the human mind, however, it means that the human mind can have no mental frame of reference that could correspond to something existing *outside* of sentient, environmental, as well as psychological experience. A human being in other words, must think as the human constitution dictates. In the light of this, it is considered by many to be an absurdity to suggest that human beings may contact the supernatural realm even if it does truly exist. An appropriate analogy would be the absurdity of expecting a person born blind to visualise a sunset - it is simply not in a blind person's constitutional capacity to do so (Pierce 1996:23). The way that Lewis deals with this problem, I shall explain in two stages.

Firstly, I will show how Lewis argues a *means* by which a being that is restricted to the three-dimensional, natural realm may yet comprehend the supernatural.

Secondly, I shall discuss the *instrument* that Lewis believed conveyed this means.

1.6.2 Means by which the supernatural is comprehended

It cannot be denied by any serious thinker that every human conception must be limited to the human's own perception of physical experience. A tautology may emphasise this - it is impossible for a human mind to conceive of anything that is inconceivable. To my knowledge this was first effectively pressed home in Western philosophy by Berkley, who, in his work, *Principles of Human Knowledge* (Dancy 1987:24), refuted the misconception that the human mind was capable of any real abstraction. He writes,

For since all things that exist are only particulars, how come we by general terms or where find we those general natures they are supposed to stand for? Words become general by being made the sign of general *ideas*; and *ideas* become general by separating from them the circumstances of time and place and any other *ideas* that may determine them to this or that particular existence. By this way of abstraction they are made capable of representing more individuals than one.

Berkley argues here that the only way that a person can conceptualise anything abstract or metaphysical is by 'borrowing' images from physical experience and then employing them as representations, thereby *symbolising* the abstract. This Berkleyan argument is now generally accepted as obvious (Dancy 1987:23). This fact is evident and may be illustrated in all extant metaphysical writings. Nowhere can be found in any spiritual literature at all anything sublimely *other* in essence, or anything never before perceived. For example, In the Christian Scriptures, God is presented as a *King* who sits on a *throne* surrounded by *courtiers* and *servants*. Heaven is represented as a place in geographic terms, containing *streets of gold* and *surrounding walls*. The contention cannot be refuted that every idea that humanity ever imagines about a reality beyond this dimension, is made up of physical material, is both spatial and temporal, and has three dimensional ontology. This, according to many, would effectively serve as conclusive evidence that it is therefore impossible for a human mind to ever transcend the Noumenal Barrier in order to attain true knowledge of the supernatural. All theology, it may be argued, is in the long run, nothing more than anthropology. Whatever a person may say about spiritual experience, in actuality, is constructed entirely on physical frames of reference and therefore is not truly spiritual or supernatural at all.

It is at the challenge of this perplexing dilemma that Lewis can offer a great assistance. The reason why Lewis unashamedly proclaimed as very truth the ancient creeds of Christendom was not that he was oblivious to the above objection to supernatural knowledge. Lewis was fully aware of this objection (Peters 1998:35, Sayer 1997:308), but he firmly believed that there is a *means* by which it is indeed possible for humanity to think supernaturally.

In an address given at Mansfield College, Oxford, Lewis presented perhaps the fullest explanation of a concept that he called *Transposition*. Because of its lucidity and completeness, I shall quote rather substantially from this paper in order to establish the thesis of this crucial layer in Lewis' apologetics. He begins his description of *Transposition* at the point where I have so far led this argument (*Screwtape Proposes a Toast* 1977:77),

Put in its most general terms our problem is that of the obvious continuity between things that are admittedly natural and things which, it is claimed, are spiritual; the reappearance in what professes to be our supernatural life of all the same old elements which make up our natural life and (it would seem) of no others. If we have really been visited by a revelation from beyond nature, is it not very strange that an Apocalypse can furnish with nothing more than selections from terrestrial experience (crowns, thrones, and music), that devotion can find no language but that of human lovers, and the rite whereby Christians enact a mystical union should turn out to be the old familiar act of eating and drinking?

Here is the inescapable barrier to metaphysics presented in a way that cannot be denied. Why, if supernatural revelation occurs, does it never seem to introduce into human knowledge anything different from that of ordinary everyday experience?

The answer that Lewis supplies is wonderfully adequate to the scrutiny of rational examination, as well as (I am confident) irrefutable. Lewis in the address quotes an extract from the writing of the famous diarist Samuel Pepys in which Pepys is describing an aesthetic experience that he had enjoyed during a musical recital. In this account he says that the effect that the music's beauty had upon him actually made him feel a physical sensation which he describes as '*feeling sick*'. Lewis goes on to show how the sensation of '*feeling sick*', may well have been a pleasant experience when Pepys felt it as he heard the music, the very same sensation however, would have not been considered as being pleasant at all, if it had been experienced because caused by something negative. The very same physical sensation would not have been a pleasure but a pain if it occurred because Pepys was scared, or flu-ridden. One single physical sensation Lewis contends may be caused by a number of different experiences. He writes (1977:79),

I find that this *kick* or *flutter* is exactly the same sensation, which, in me, accompanies great and sudden anguish. Introspection can discover no

difference at all between my neural response to very bad news and my neural response to the overture to *The Magic Flute*. If I were to judge simply by sensations I would come to the absurd conclusion that joy and anguish are the same thing, that what I most dread is the same as what I most desire.

We conclude from this that a number of different psychological experiences result in the same physical reaction. Lewis goes on (1977:80),

And here I suggest, we have found what we are looking for. I take our emotional life to be '*higher*' than the life of our sensations - not, of course, morally higher, but richer, more varied, more subtle. And this is a higher level nearly all of us know. And I believe that if anybody watches carefully the relationship between his emotions and his sensations he will discover the following facts: 1) that nerves do respond, and in a sense most adequately and exquisitely to the emotions; 2) that their resources are far more limited, the possible variations of sense far fewer, than those of emotion; 3) and that the senses compensate for this by using the same sensation to express more than one emotion - even as we have seen, to express opposite emotions.

This transposition of the more complex emotions upon the less varied physical sensations is acknowledged by all, but the concept of transposition is not limited to emotion and sensation Lewis develops his point one step further (1977:81),

As examples show, we are all quite familiar with this kind of transposition or adaptation from a richer to a poorer medium. The most familiar

example of all is the art of drawing. The problem here is to represent a three-dimensional world on a flat sheet of paper. The solution is perspective, and perspective means that we must give more than one value to a two-dimensional shape. Thus in a drawing of a cube, we use an acute angle to represent what is a right angle in the real world: for example, the point of a spear or the gable of a house. The very same shape that you must draw to give the illusion of a straight road receding from the spectator, is also the shape you draw for a dunce's cap.

This adaptation of '*higher*' realities being imposed upon '*lower*' realities or, *Transposition*, because it may be observed in multiple cases and applies consistently, deserves the designation of a *law*. Lewis claims that the law of *Transposition* involves two related points (1977:82),

1) It is clear that in each case, what is happening in the lower medium can be understood only if we know the higher medium. The instance where this knowledge is most commonly lacking is the musical one. The piano version means one thing to the musician who knows the original orchestral score and another thing to the man who hears it simply as a piano piece.

2) It is of some importance to notice that the word symbolism is not adequate in all cases to cover the relation between the higher medium and its transposition in the lower...Thus the relation between speech and writing is one of symbolism. The written characters exist solely for the eye, the spoken word solely for the ear. There is a 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 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 more than a sign, because in it, the thing signified, is really in a certain mode present.

The above two essential points of Transposition can be encapsulated in the following way:

- i) *Transposition* cannot be recognised to have occurred, unless *both* the lower, as well as the higher medium are understood.
- ii) A higher medium is not merely symbolically represented in the lower medium in *Transposition*, but the higher truly and essentially exists in the lower medium.

Once the scientifically verifiable claim of Transposition has been applied to higher and lower forms of observable phenomena, there is no rational ground for not applying the same principle to the problem of metaphysical comprehension. Lewis in this address now drives this point home (1977:84),

Let us now return to our original question about Spirit and Nature, God and Man. Our problem was that in what claims to be our spiritual life all

the elements of our natural life recur: and, what is worse, it looks at first glance as if no other elements are present. We now see that is the spiritual is richer than the natural (as no one who believes in its existence would deny) then it is exactly what we should expect. The sceptic's conclusion that the so-called spiritual is really derived from the natural, that it is a mirage or projection or imaginary extension of the natural, is also exactly what we should expect; for, as we have seen, this is the mistake of the observer who knew only the lower medium would be bound to make in every case of Transposition. The brutal man never can, by analysis find anything but lust in love; the Flatlander never can find anything but flat shapes in a picture: physiology can never find anything in thought except twitchings of grey matter...Everything is different when you approach the Transposition from above, as we all do in the case of emotion and sensation, or of the three-dimensional world and pictures, and the spiritual man does in the case we are considering.

There can be no reasonable excuse why *Transposition* should not be applied to the problem of metaphysical comprehension. The only objection to this that I can imagine, is that whereas in the case of *Transposition* occurring in the physical realm, the phenomena may be observed and verified on both the higher as well as the lower level, this cannot be done when *Transposition* is applied to the supernatural. This, I freely admit, would indeed be a valid objection if Lewis' intention in utilising this argument was attempting to scientifically prove (with axioms and methodologies confined to the observance of nature) the existence of the supernatural. This,

of course, was not Lewis' intention - his goal was far less ambitious. Lewis wished to simply demonstrate that there is no rational absurdity in assuming that a finite human mind could somehow comprehend the supernatural. I believe that in this he was successful.

1.6.3 The vehicle for comprehending the supernatural

Lewis scholar Paul S. Fiddes in his article entitled, *Lewis the Myth Maker* (Walker and Patrick 1998:132), writes,

For C. S. Lewis, the relationship between myth and fact is more precise than this vague impression and underlying his fantasies for adults and children is an exact theory about myth that dates from at least the time of his conversion to Christianity.

Lewis writes in his 1961 book on literary criticism, *An Experiment in Criticism*, a wonderfully encapsulating passage on his own particular understanding of the term, *myth* (1988:41),

There is then, a particular kind of story, which has a value in itself - a value independent of its embodiment in any literary work. The story of Orpheus strikes and strikes deep, of itself; the fact that Virgil and others have told it in good poetry is irrelevant. To think about it and be moved by it is not necessary to think about those poets or to be moved by them. It is true that such a story can hardly reach us except in words. But this is logically accidental.

Lewis' conception of *Transposition* explained above, will enable us to better understand why he held to the conviction that mythology was uniquely crucial to the constitution of the phenomenon called *religion*. The Lewisian term, *myth*, must not be misunderstood. It is not allegory (i.e. the relating of a story using symbolically corresponding characters and events) (Christensen 1979:66), neither must it be understood as primitive and unscientific explanation of the unknown. *Myth* contains more of reality within its content, not less. Fiddes describes the three most popular ideas concerning myth (Walker and Patrick 1998:134),

- 1.) Some theologians refer to any talk about God's acting in the world as myth, since the action of God cannot be described or analyzed in scientific terms. It has been urged that we should 'de-mythologise', or separate out the kernel of truth about human life from the husk of the myth.
- 2.) Others reserve the term myth for only certain kinds of talk about God, namely fictional stories about the activity of God or divine beings, by which we project into the past the deepest experiences of life we have in the present.
- 3.) Others insist that myth refers to an event which has actually happened, but that it interprets the event in a way that is completely disconnected from history. Talk about God's acting through Christ to atone for the sins of the world is then said to be a 'myth' because it operates on a totally different level from historical fact... It urges that the historical story of the charismatic prophet from Galilee and the mythical

story of the Divine Redeemer cannot be mixed into each other's space
without confusion

None of the above fit the term *Myth* as it is used in Lewis' Christian writings. To Lewis, *Myth* serves in the same way that metaphor serves language, yet far more profoundly (Christensen 1979:70, Schakel 1984:2). It may help for me to illustrate the Lewisian understanding of *myth* as follows: In order for one to describe to a person who has been born blind the visual wonder of a sunset, one would have to employ *Transposition*. i.e. it would be necessary to compensate visionary references that the blind person does not enjoy, to the remaining four senses. One would have to describe a sunset condescendingly. 'A sunset', one would have to say, 'feels a certain way, or *smells*, *tastes*, or *sounds* like this or that.' I am certainly not poetically endowed with the ability to make this transposition myself - I will leave this to the imagination! The point that I wish to make however, is this - To Lewis, the compensating descent that would be performed in such a transposition from vision to touch, taste, smell, and hearing, would constitute *myth*. Lewis writes in a paper entitled, *Myth Became Fact (God in the Dock 1990:38)*, 'In the enjoyment of a great myth we come nearest to experiencing as a concrete what can otherwise be understood only by an abstraction.' In the very same way that all communication to a person born blind on the descriptions of vision would have to be

condescended to compensating faculties, so all religious talk is in this same sense, *mythological*. This may be emphasised in the following statement made by Lewis in a paper entitled, *Priestesses in the Church?* (*God in the Dock* 1990:87),

Being what we are, rational but also animate, amphibians who start from the world of sense and proceed through myth and metaphor to the world of Spirit, I do not see how we could have come to know the greatness of God without that hint furnished by the greatness of the material universe.

Myth is the only rational and conceivable way that physical and sense-bound thinking creatures could possibly experience the supernatural. The limitations of human understanding, as Kant long ago proved, are firmly established. If however Lewis' idea concerning Myth are accepted, it would serve as a proposed *vehicle* by which this barrier might well be transcended. It can not on rational grounds, be argued that the *Noumenal Barrier* implies the non-existence of supernatural reality, but merely that human consciousness cannot, in its own strength, aspire to the comprehension of anything that is supernatural. Myth is, to Lewis, this problem's solution. Myth is the *vehicle* for human transcendental thought. Myth in Lewis' works is the very vehicle used by Divinity in order to communicate with His creatures. In his allegory, a *Pilgrim's Regress*, Lewis has God say this to the book's hero John (1990:217),

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 (the personification in this book for philosophy) 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. For this end I made your senses and for this end your imagination that you might see My face and live.

From an early age, Lewis was fascinated by mythology, especially the Nordic myths of Odin, Balder, and Thor (Sayer 1997:92). In his autobiography, *Surprised by Joy* (1971:61), he attributed *Norse Mythology* to a form of *Sehnsucht* in his early life. Although Lewis held that all religious communication *per se* was mythological in nature, he sometimes used the medium of pure myth to convey his Christian message in later writings (*i.e. The Narnia Chronicles, Till we have Faces*. Peters 1998:77).

Following the above line of reasoning employed by Lewis, it can be understood why the barrier imposed by all *Post-Enlightenment* philosophy was not a hindrance to his rational approach to Christian apologetics. Lewis was able to apply reason to religion, in the knowledge that his reasoning on such matters, was not a philosophical absurdity, but that his reasoning corresponded to

mythological proposition via *Transposition* in exactly the same way that it applied to physical phenomena. The only difference being that the Mythological contained within itself *supernatural reality*. This approach that I have described in this chapter, I shall call, *Accommodated Reasoning*. The term should now be understood in the context of Lewis' argument that I have pointed out in this section.

Lewis' works that deal specifically with this subject

An address given entitled, *Transposition (Screwtape Proposes a Toast 1977:75)*. This address has been much used in the above discussion.

An address given entitled, *Behind the Scenes (Christian Reunion and Other Essays 1990:95)*, answers the objection to the validity of human thought by the Freudian school, who hold that the primary content of the human mind is unconscious.

An address given entitled, *Is Theology Poetry? (Screwtape Proposes a Toast 1977:41)*, deals with the content of theological language.

An address given entitled, *Dogma and the Universe (God in the Dock 1990:27)*, argues in favor of a rational universe, and the corresponding reason in human awareness.

The paper, *Myth Became Fact (God in the Dock 1990:39)*, is an address given which considers the phenomenon of mythology and its relation to actuality.

The paper, *Religion without Dogma? (Timeless at Heart 1987:84)*, is a criticism of the idea that the elements of mythology in Christianity should be jettisoned in our modern age.

The paper, *First and Second Things (First and Second Things 1985:19)*, addresses the misconception that myth is a self-sufficient entity. He argues that myth is nothing without its metaphysical content.

The address entitled, *Religion, Reality or Substitute? (Christian Reflections 1991:56)*, deals with the priority of religious experience over the sensual.

The address entitled, *The Language of Religion (Christian Reflections 1991:164)*, points out the mythological content in religious language. Lewis' science fiction trilogy, *Out of the Silent Planet*, *Perelandra*, and *That Hideous Strength*, all convey the Christian message in mythological terms.

The children's books *The Narnia Chronicles*, were written in order to convey Christian thought to children using the language and symbolism of mythology (See Peters 1998:76).

Lewis' 1947 work *The Great Divorce* (1977), attempts to communicate concepts of Divine retribution in a language that is mythological.

The 1963 book *Prayer Letters to Malcolm* (1977:74), in chapter 14, deals with religious imagery in prayer and its mythological basis.

The entire 1947 book, *Miracles* (1990:85), involves the essential presence of reason in a world of enigma.

Lewis' 1955 autobiography, *Surprised by Joy* (1971:170) devotes a chapter to the impact of mythology upon his own life and conversion.

The allegorical 1934 work *The Pilgrim's Regress* (1990:173), in book eight, chapters 1 - 5 addresses the reconciliation of rationality to numinous mystery that takes place in the hero's story.

1.7 ACCOMMODATED RATIONALITY AND CHRISTIANITY

The line of reasoning in Lewis' epistemology leads us to the conclusion that some form of dualism must exist. Nature, as a closed system of cause and effect, we learn, as we follow his line of reasoning, can not fully account for the rationality, morality, and even human aspiration that pervades the universe, thereby making it a *cosmos*. It has to be admitted, if Lewis' argument has been followed up to this point, that human experience of the universe suggests a dualism of some kind - at very least - a dualism where subjectivity stands over against the objectivity that is being observed. It is at this point that one may cease one's search, and be satisfied with the idea that spirituality does indeed exist, and yet not as something wholly *other* in being. This is the concept of *Pantheism*. The concept of a Pantheistic universe would be one where the supernatural may well be accepted as an appropriate terminology that would be useful to describe the dualism that is experienced by human awareness (Urmson 1983:210). This concept of the supernatural, however, needs to be validated. A Pantheistic concept of the supernatural contains the conviction that there is indeed a *bona fide* reality outside of the *cause-effect* system of the natural realm (Urmson 1983:210), but this dualism recognised, is a dualism of *type*, not of *kind* (this is a vital point). In other words, both spiritual as well as physical realities to Pantheism exist within the same essence. Pantheism is a closed system (Kraft 1992:153). An analogy that may help to describe Pantheism's idea of the duality of the

universe is that of ice (a solid) and steam (a gas). Both of these properties are of the same constitutional make-up, yet exist as different from each other. Where the natural world is, at our present stage of human scientific development, largely measurable and predictable, in time it is believed, it may be possible for humanity to have also harnessed the coexisting spiritual realities as well.

Lewis himself, in his pilgrimage, once held to the above conviction (*Surprised by Joy* 1971:159). Pantheism enabled him to hold, at the same time, to the concept of a closed universe with no mysterious reality outside of it, as well as an intellectually respectable credence towards the mystical and metaphysical (Palmer1996:5). This world-view, however, could not be held long by Lewis due to one vital point - that of the *Categorical Imperative*. Lewis came to realise that it was inconsistent for him to hold to both the pantheistic world-view, as well as adhere to the moral concept of right and wrong - true and false. Lewis writes (*Mere Christianity* 1989:41),

If you do not take the distinction between good and bad very seriously, then it is easy to say that anything that you find in the world is a part of God. But of course, if you think some things really bad, and God really good, then you cannot talk like that. You must believe that God is separate from the world and that some things that we see in it are contrary His will. Confronted with a cancer or a slum, the Pantheist can say, 'If you could only see it from the Divine point of view, you would realise that this also is God.' The Christian replies, 'Don't talk damned nonsense!'

In his allegory, *The Pilgrim's Regress*, Lewis presents the two parts of human nature, intellect and morality, as two characters John and Vertue,

who together, go on a quest for the *Sehnsucht* that is burning in their hearts. At one point of the story, they both encounter a sage by the name of *Wisdom*, who introduces them, and converts them to the pantheistic world-view. This newfound world-view delights John, the intellectual side of man, but it throws Vertue into utter despair. Representing, for Lewis the moral side of humanity, Vertue cries out in the book (1990:176), 'What we call evil - our greatest wickedness - seen in the true setting, is an element of the good. I am a doubter of the doubt. What we call our righteousness is filthy rags.' What Vertue cries out in the *Pilgrim's Regress* is Lewis' final verdict on Pantheism. If evil truly exists, as it is understood by the entire human race, a thing not of mere privation, but counter-existent (Heppel 1978:324), then by very definition, evil cannot be a part of Divinity. This consideration brings us to the following condition. Either God must be somehow distinct from, and outside of a universe that is corrupted by evil, or the *Categorical Imperative*, something that we all live by, is deceptive. It is at this point that Lewis takes leave of pantheism.

With the elimination of the pantheistic option however, Lewis leaves us with the only remaining viable explanation for the enigma of mind-matter dualism - *Theism* (*Mere Christianity* 1989:47). This is the world-view that God exists over and above the universe in a way analogous to that of an author and a character in his book. It is at this point that it will be made manifest why Lewis arrived at his conclusions concerning Christianity.

It should be remembered from the previous chapter, that Lewis held that for any human knowledge concerning the supernatural realm to truly exist, a transposition must have occurred prior to the knowing. If Kant's epistemology is to be taken seriously (Lewis does it seems, take it seriously), then it must be considered as being inconceivable that sense-bound human consciousness could ever transcend its own physical limitations, in order to discover who, and what, a Divinity was. The mere existence of the supernatural may well be arrived at inferentially (see *Anselm's Ontological Argument*, Tilghman 1994:58), but this discovery will prove to be without descriptive content. It follows from the above premise, that no human knowledge of the supernatural is possible at all, unless some form of supernatural condescension had firstly taken place. This statement may require some elaboration.

In my previous chapter, I referred to an analogy that Lewis had made on the subject of transposition (*Screwtape Proposes a Toast* 1977:75). Lewis gave the example of a pianist playing a musical score that had been originally intended for an entire orchestra, but it was, in this case, being played entirely on the keys of a piano. Because the pianist was aware of the original purpose for the musical score, he would himself be able to recognise, signified by the notation printed on the page, the various instrumental parts intended. The pianist would be able to recognise in the written score, how the notation originally related to various intended

instruments. The pianist in other words, would, because of his prior knowledge, look at the score and see a symphony. The audience on the other hand, would have absolutely no conception of the original orchestral intentions of the composer at all. All that they would hear would be the notes on the piano keys. They would have no idea that these piano notes compensated for the lack of a full orchestra. They would have no idea whatsoever of the composer's original orchestral intention. They may even consider the piece to have been written intentionally for the piano alone. We notice in this illustration that the audience understands the one musical event in two different ways, one complex (by the pianist), and the other more simple. In this illustration, we see that the audience could never discover the orchestral intention of the score's composer by merely listening to the piano. Should the pianist decide not to reveal the transposition to the audience, then the original orchestral intentions of the composer would never be known. Only by the pianist explaining the transposition that has taken place, would the audience be any the wiser. As Lewis explains, in transposition, the higher and more complex, must be *revealed* to be involved in the lower, otherwise it cannot even be realised (*Screwtape Proposes a Toast* 1977:75).

There is a law of corollary that Lewis recognised as being inherent in the concept of Theism (Walker 1998:148). He saw that it inevitably must follow from the reality of the limitation of human comprehension, that

without some kind of Transposition, no supernatural knowledge is *possible* (*Screwtape Proposes a Toast* 1977:75). Syllogism may help to illuminate this vital point.

PREMISE ONE: Theism holds that Divinity exists supernaturally.

PREMISE TWO: The human mind is incapable of comprehending the supernatural.

CONCLUSION: Theism as human theory, refutes itself.

In order for theism to be considered a viable world-view, an adjustment needs to be made to our syllogism above.

PREMISE ONE: Theism holds that a Self-revealing Divinity exists supernaturally.

PREMISE TWO: The human mind is able to receive Divine revelation via Transposition.

CONCLUSION: Theism is valid as a world-view only because Divinity is self-revealing.

It has to be admitted that, in order for Theism to be vindicated as a world-view, it must include in its premises, the concept of a *transpositional revelation*. A clearer way of putting this is to say that Theism must, in order to avoid absurdity, be *incarnational*. The higher reality must condescend to the lower. Without the condescension of the supernatural,

the human mind would find the supernatural incomprehensible. Lewis writes (*Miracles* 1990:115),

What we can understand, if the Christian doctrine is true, is 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. We understand that if God so descends into a human spirit, the human spirit so descends into nature, and our thoughts into our senses and passions, and if adult minds (but only the best of them) can descend into sympathy with children, and men into sympathy with beasts, 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 suspected. 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.

If Theism is to be accepted, then it must be understood in some way to be what may be termed, *incarnational*. By this I mean that the higher reality must in some way condescend to 'enter into' the lower, in order for a transposition to occur. This contention is the bridge with which Lewis links (by means of myth), Theism with Christianity. In an article written in 1944 for the periodical *World Dominion* (*God in the Dock* 1990:39), Lewis writes describing the transpositional function of myth, and how it relates to the religious mind. He writes, 'Myth is the isthmus which connects the peninsular world of thought with that vast continent we really belong to.'

From an early age, Lewis had been drawn by the mystical magnetism of mythology, especially the Nordic sagas of Odin and his pantheon of gods (*Surprised by Joy* 1971:61). In his later pre-Christian studies, he noted the fact that so many of the world mythologies contained similar and recurring

themes (*An Experiment in Criticism* 1992:40). It became a fascination to him, long before his conversion to Christianity, to notice how similar in mystical appeal and content many of the myths actually seem to be (*Surprised by Joy* 1971: 132). It struck Lewis that the most intriguing similarity is the recurring theme of how the divine in some way condescends to 'come down' to human reality, thereby benefiting humanity. This can be noted for example, in the Babylonian myth of Marduk who created humanity from the corpse of his rival Tiamat (*Library of Modern Knowledge* 1979:694). Notice here, how the death of a divinity constitutes life for humanity. The Egyptian myth of the god called Osiris, king of the dead, who through his annual death gives life to the earth's vegetation. In a similar vein, there is the Canaanite myth of Baal, who year by year gives up his own life for the life of humanity (*Library of Modern Knowledge* 1979:694). The Greek man-god, Hercules, enters Hades, the world of the dead, in order to retrieve his human lover (*Library of Modern Knowledge* 1979:694). The Nordic king of gods, Odin has a child by a human woman in order to vindicate the death of his son, the god called *Balder the Beautiful* (*Library of Modern Knowledge* 1979:694). The Indian god, Krishna, is killed and reborn thereby liberating his human lover (*Library of Modern Knowledge* 1979:694). These above are but a sample from some of the better known myths.

The mythical theme of a dying god being the catalyst of some great human benefit is so noticeable in its recurrence (*Miracles* 1990:116) that scholars have, over the years, endeavoured to rationally explain the phenomenon. Pioneer psychologist, J. C. Jung (1875-1961) for example, attempts to explain the commonality present in many strands of world mythology by appealing to a *collective unconscious*, this he claimed, is an inborn connection in the unconscious mind to *archetypes* that have been ingrained, through the process of evolution, into the human psyche (Pierce 1996:87). Anthropologist, C. Levi-Strauss (1908-1998), suggested that the commonality recognised in many strands of world mythology could be explained in terms of the human mind's inborn survival tendency to construct meaning in an otherwise meaningless world. This common human desire to be at peace with the powers that control one's destiny, in his opinion, explains the reappearing of the similar soteriological themes in all the myths of the world (Pierce 1996:107).

Lewis, because of his epistemological presupposition concerning the supernatural (*The Problem of Pain* 1990:19), saw the thread of commonality that exists in world mythology as an indication of a point of contact that all human cultures have had (shown by their mythologies) with the supernatural *via* transposition. He writes (*Miracles* 1990:116),

The pattern is there in Nature, because it was first there in God. All the instances of it which I have mentioned turn out to be but transpositions of the divine theme into a minor key...The total pattern, of which they are only the turning point, is the real Death and Rebirth...For there have, of course, been many religions in which

the annual drama (so important for the life of the tribe) was almost admittedly the central theme, and the deity - Adonis, Osiris, or other - almost undisguisedly a personification of the corn, a 'corn king' who died and rose again each year.

The mythical recurring theme of a dying god serving as benefit to human life is also present in the Christian gospel. Christ, the Son of God, leaves His multi-dimensional reality, enters our three-dimensional world, and dies on a cross vicariously for a sin-sick humanity. Surely it cannot but be realised, that, unless by some great coincidence, this Gospel story contains nothing essentially novel in its thematic content? The similarity of this story with the great myths of the world cannot be ignored (See Frazer: *The Golden Bough*, Peters 1998:54). This was, for Lewis at an earlier stage of his spiritual development, his own major objection to the suggestion that Christianity held the monopoly on truth (Sayer 1997:226). In the course of time however, the conviction eventually solidified within him, that Christianity is indeed a myth - but a myth in the sense of *transposition* (see chapter three). Lewis was convinced that in the final analysis, myth was the one and only medium extant by which a finite comprehension may receive Divine communication. Christianity, to Lewis, deserved the status of being called the ultimate myth (as among many minor and shadowy myths that convey, in lesser degrees, the Divine transposition) simply because it took place physically and in history (*The Pilgrim's Regress* 1990:195). Lewis writes (*God in the Dock* 1990:43),

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. We pass from a Balder or an Osiris, dying nobody knows when or where, to a historical Person crucified (it is all in order) under Pontius Pilate. By becoming fact, it does not cease to be myth: that is the miracle.

It is, to Lewis therefore, the historicity of the Christian Gospel that establishes it as the ultimate Mythology. The other mythologies, in varying degrees of clarity, stand in relation to it as do shadows to a substance.

Lewis writes (*Miracles* 1990:120),

Where the real God is present, the shadows of that God do not appear; that which the shadows resembled does. The Hebrews throughout their history were being constantly headed off from the worship of Nature-gods; not because the Nature-gods were in all respects unlike the God of Nature, but because at best, they were merely like, and it was the destiny of that nation to be turned away from likeness to the thing itself.

Christian *kerugma* to Lewis, is the encapsulated and final message from the ultimate reality that exists behind our own. This communication, due to the limitations of comprehension (something that is inherent within our human consciousness), is presented by God to our understanding, *via* the medium of myth. Myth, to Lewis, signified the transposition of higher reality into our own three-dimensional frame of consciousness, thereby utilising space-time, physical imagery as metaphorically corresponding to ultimate reality. An example of this mythological transposition would be as follows: the statement that God is a *king*, ruling a *kingdom*, from His exalted *throne*, is, to Lewis, a statement of factual reality (*Timeless at*

Heart 1991:87). The terms, *king*, *kingdom* and *throne*, signify a supernatural corresponding reality that, although humanly incomprehensible, are adequately expressed in the above terms, to motivate the desired human response. Myth, to Lewis, always contains within its structure and wording, something more, something wholly other, and therefore, for human comprehension, only metaphorically expressible (*Timeless at Heart* 1991:84).

It may be argued that although Lewis' particular usage of the term *myth* is justifiable as an adequate description of a unique vehicle for supernatural communication, it is still wide open to misinterpretation. It is abundantly clear that to the popular mind, as well as in New Testament terminology (2 Peter 1:16), that the word *myth* conveys the signification of *fiction* as opposed to *fact*. It may be reasonably argued because of this, that Lewis would have been better advised to have employed another, less misleading word to describe the above transposition. When all is said and done this point has to be admitted – it is indeed possible for the uninformed to be led off on a tangent because of his use of the word *myth*. In defence of Lewis' use of this particular term however, it must also be remembered that Lewis was a professional scholar of literature and that he assumed that his terminology was being understood within in this particular paradigm. He writes (*An Experiment in Criticism* 1992:43), "In spite of these inconveniences I must either use the word *myth* or coin a

word, and I think the former is the lesser evil of the two. Those who read to understand – I make no provision for style-mongers – will take the word in the sense I give it.”

It is Lewis’ understanding of supernatural reality existing *in tandem* with the natural realm, as well as his conviction that rationality pervades all things, including human thinking, that supported the above position. Lewis’ epistemology enabled him to hold intelligently on to a rational, Christian orthodoxy, without resorting to mysticism and the occult.

Lewis writings that deal especially with this subject

In the introduction to 1940 book, *The Problem of Pain* (1990:11), Lewis demonstrates how mythology was solidified in history by the Jewish people.

In his 1947 book, *Miracles*, in the fourteenth chapter entitled, *The Grand Miracle* (1990:112), the above argument on myth and Christianity is discussed in great detail.

In the 1934 book entitled *The Pilgrim’s Regress*, book eight, chapter six, (1990:156), we find a dialogue between the hero of the story and a sage named History, who explains how myth is God’s vehicle of communication with mortality.

In his 1955 autobiography, *Surprised by Joy*, chapter fourteen entitled *Checkmate* (1971:170), Lewis relates how in his own experience, his convictions concerning myth and Christianity dawned on him during a heated conversation on this subject with two friends H. Dyson and J. R. R. Tolkien.

In the 1946 fantasy, *The Great Divorce* (1977:73), Lewis presents a dialogue between himself and his mentor, George MacDonald, who explains the significance of mythical imagery.

In the third book found in his collection on *Broadcast Talks*, entitled *Mere Christianity* (1989:103), Lewis writes in the last chapter of how human existence is different to God in kind, and therefore requires a transposition in order to effect an adequate contact.

The following shorter writings by Lewis deal largely with the subject that is covered in this chapter:

The paper entitled *Transposition* (*Screwtape proposes a Toast* 1977:75). This entire paper eloquently covers our present topic in a lucid and complete way.

The paper entitled, *The Grand Miracle* (*God in the Dock* 1990:56), explains how Christianity fulfils and gives substance to, many mythical themes.

The paper entitled, *Myth became Fact* (*God in the Dock* 1990:39), relates, as the title of the work suggests, how Christianity may be regarded as the historical substantiation of myth.

The paper entitled *Is Theism Important?* (*Timeless at Heart* 1991:105), as well as the paper found in the same volume entitled, *Religion without Dogma?* (p.84). Both deal fundamentally with the contention that myth contains more, and not less than the imagery that it utilises.

1.8 **LEWISIAN EPISTEMOLOGY CONFIRMED BY LEWIS SCHOLARSHIP**

In order to ensure a measure of objectivity in my description of the epistemology of C. S. Lewis, it is necessary, before we proceed with the debate proper, to show something of the general consensus in Lewis scholarship concerning his views on the matters that have been discussed in the previous three chapters. Because my extraction of Lewis' epistemological position from his writings for the purpose of an epistemological debate on post-modernism is (as far as I know) unprecedented in Lewis scholarship, it may be considered needful for me to confirm my claims by means of reference to other Lewis scholars in order to ensure that my particular utilisation of his writings are not at all inappropriate. I will therefore, consider the general interpretation given to my three extracted epistemological themes by Lewis scholars. Firstly, we will consider the general understanding given to Lewis' supernaturalist world-view. Secondly, we shall consider in the same light, Lewisian rationality, and thirdly, we shall consider the general understanding of Lewis scholarship to his teaching on transposition, myth, and human comprehension of the metaphysical realm.

1.8.1 **LEWIS AND THE SUPERNATURAL**

James Patrick, in his article entitled, *C. S. Lewis and Idealism* (Walker 1998:173), writes,

When Christopher Derrick asked Lewis in a Cambridge pub to name the philosophical school to which God might subscribe, Lewis' answer was immediate: God is a Berkeleyan Idealist. Idealism had given Lewis the vision of a world alive with reason and with God, and it is important to note, that the systematic weaknesses of the idealist underpinnings of his thought usually have no obvious influences on Lewis' fiction.

Lewis had studied and taught philosophy during his early years at Oxford (Sayer 1997:185), and was particularly fond of Berkeley, the eighteenth century Irish bishop, who influenced idealist epistemology in a profound and lasting way (Dancy 1987:3). Berkeley taught that reality is ultimately spiritual (or *ideal*) as opposed to physical. This he argued by indicating that all human awareness of the physical universe is known entirely and only by experience (Dancy 1987:35). There is nothing a human being can say about physical matter outside of one's perceptual experience of it. Berkeley therefore argued that in order to be rationally honest and consistent, all of reality is and can only be, something perceived. From this epistemological position Berkeley established his proof of God's existence. If reality is ultimately that perceived, then reality in its totality must have an omniscient perceiver, i.e. God. To Berkeley, and his keen student, Lewis, the non-existence of God is an absurdity - if reality is always perceived, then there can be no reality without the absolute perceiver (Dancy 1987:49). Even before his conversion in 1931, Lewis had long been convinced of the truth of theism (Schakel 1984:108, Sayer 1997:207).

Lewis scholars are unanimous on the fact that the existence of a supernatural life-support is inseparably linked to Lewis' understanding of the universe. Thomas C. Peters considers Lewis' supernatural epistemology to be the very antithesis to modernism's pessimism (Peters 1998:59). Michael Christensen demonstrates that Lewis, throughout his Christian writings, consistently, yet in different ways, pointed to four basic clues in human experience that should confirm supernatural reality; the numinous *sehnsucht*, categorical imperative, and rationality itself (Christensen 1979:74-86). Lewis biographers agree on the point that his eventual conviction concerning the existence of the Christian God was in reality, merely a crystallisation of previously held ideas about the supernatural (Sayer 1997:217). Jacques Sys, in his article entitled, *'Look out! Its alive!'* (Walker 1998:176) writes about this conviction of the ultimate supernatural reality that Lewis based his epistemology on when his spiritual views had finally developed,

Let us consider Lewis' highly personal conception of 'facthood'. Facthood is the first ingredient of the formula, not merely in the historical sense of actual events, but in the more mysterious and so to speak, 'magical' sense of the word. God is a 'thing', not an idea; God is also a person, He is 'this' God; and an intensely personal thing, He is that 'resisting material', the 'untamed' God whose nature and will cannot be reduced to reason, whose very 'facthood' cannot be forced into the corset of logical categories. It is indeed characteristic of Lewis' God that He is both intelligible and absolutely unknowable.

The human comprehension and enjoyment of God, to Lewis, is the ultimate reason for life on earth (Peters 1998:251). Peter Kreeft, in his article entitled, *How to Save Western Civilisation* (Walker 1998:201) writes

on Lewis' concept of the human significance in a God-saturated *cosmos*, and the danger of ignoring it:

The most important and enlightening single statement about our civilisation that I have ever read is this one from the *Abolition of Man*:

There is something which unites magic and applied science while separating both from the wisdom of earlier ages. For the wise men of old, the cardinal problem had been how to conform the soul to reality, and the solution had been knowledge, self-discipline and virtue. For magic and applied science alike the problem is how to subdue reality to the wishes of man (and) the solution is a technique.

Aristotle related technique, technical knowledge, know-how, as third on the hierarchy of values, after 1.) Contemplation of the truth for its own sake and 2.) Practical knowledge, or knowledge for living and acting. The modern world has simply turned this hierarchy exactly upside-down.

Two other major changes are necessary corollaries of this change from contemplation to technique, from conforming the soul to reality, to conforming reality to the soul. The first is a new conception of reality. For one does not try to conform God or the gods to the wishes of the human soul, but one tries to conform nature to those wishes. This naturalism replaces supernaturalism in metaphysics. At first, this means only ignoring God, then denying God, finally (worst of all) both. The second corollary is equally crucial. It is the poison of subjectivism, the belief that the Tao, moral values, are man made. This follows from naturalism, for if there is no God to originate values, man is the only other possible origin. If we make the rules, we can change and break them, As Dostoyevsky puts it succinctly, 'If God does not exist, everything is permissible.' With God all things are possible, but without God, all things are permissible.

The above passage is an excellent encapsulation of Lewis' appeal for sanity in a world that has jettisoned any claim to a truly supernatural reality. Biographer George Sayer believes that Lewis considered it his personal calling to defend the supernaturalist position by means of his writing ability (Sayer 1997:231).

1.8.2 Lewis and Rationality

Lewis scholars seem to be unanimous on his characteristically rational approach to apologetics (Schakel 1984:14). Lewis firmly believed that the human mind was adequately fitted for the intelligent comprehension of the natural universe, and able by means of transposition, to intelligently consider any reality beyond natural phenomena (Christensen 1979:62). Lewis scholar, James Patrick writes (Walker 1998:162),

In the end we are given in all of Lewis' works, a universe shot through with goodness and truth, with practical reason and *Logos*, a universe like, but unlike the universe of Lewis' teachers. Philosophically, this representation of reality is eminently defensible. It is the traditional, and within certain limits can claim as authorities Plato, Plotinus, Dionysius, and in part St. Augustine and St. Thomas as well as Leibniz and Berkeley. It does explain experience, and it explains it because it is, unlike the niggling scepticism of the Oxford realists, and however flawed, still significantly true.

George Sayer demonstrates that the rationality that Lewis recognised as saturating all of experienced reality, was an irrefutable argument for the reality of the supernatural realm. He writes (Sayer 1997:307),

What we call reason makes it possible for us to alter nature. But human reason cannot be explained by rational or naturalistic causes; rather, it must come from a self-existent reason, a supernatural reality that can be called God. Similarly, moral judgements can have no validity if they are part of a naturalist system in which there is no free will. They are based on human conscience, which is an incursion into nature of a self-existent moral wisdom.

Thomas Peters writes (Peters 1998:156),

Lewis argues that the materialist view may appear to work well when studying non-living matter such as rocks or chemicals, but the perspective becomes increasingly problematic as our attention moves up through the life forms and especially to human beings. For here we find self-conscious individuals possessing all kinds of emotional states and creative imaginings and carrying within them those two troublesome, intrinsic thoughts - they ought to act certain ways, and that they do not act in those ways.

The human awareness of a supernatural and *supra-experience* that is somehow structuring and regulating our consciousness as thinking beings, is foundational and always assumed in all of Lewis' Christian writings (Sayer 1997:411). Lewis scholarship all concurs at this point (Walker 1998:6). The human rational self-awareness of an overarching imperative that is both rational and moral has been referred to as the *trademark* of

Lewisian apologetics. Michael Christensen demonstrates in what way this is so (Christensen 1979:76),

As developed by Lewis in *Mere Christianity*, whenever people quarrel, make excuses for their behaviour, or blame others, they are assuming an objective, universal value system of fair play or decent behaviour. The universal sense of 'ought', as Lewis calls it in the *Abolition of Man*, is either morally binding, entailing adverse consequences if violated, or else nothing more (or less) than a cosmic bluff. If the latter then there is no moral reason for acknowledging any values save those which seem personally expedient or which might yield the greatest pleasure. If the former, man is responsible for his behaviour.

There can be no serious doubt that the above argument expounded by Christensen is a prime example of Lewisian appeal to an over-arching rationality.

1.8.3 Lewis and Accommodated Rationality

The two Lewisian terms which explain the means and vehicle by which human comprehension may grasp metaphysical, abstract, and supernatural realities are, transposition and myth (Christensen 1979:63).

Michael Christensen describes Lewisian myth as follows (1979:65),

Myth, as Lewis conceives it, is an archetypal tale, which reflects, portrays and signifies eternal realities. Myth is a real though unfocused gleam of divine truth falling on human imagination, which enables the inexpressible to be conveyed. Myth, as the highest form of symbolism, reaches after some transcendental reality, which the forms of discursive thought cannot contain. Not that myth is

irrational; rather it is non-rational. Reality is infinitely greater than human rational conception.

Myth always conveys truth in an accommodated and symbolic fashion. The truth experienced filters through the myth by means of transposition (Christensen 1979:72),

In his essay, *Transposition*, Lewis answers the question by explaining that when a higher dimension descends to a lower one, it is like translating from a language which has a large vocabulary into one which has a small vocabulary. Or to use another analogy, transposition can be compared to the problems involved in drawing. How can aspects of a three-dimensional world be represented on a two-dimensional sheet of paper? Obviously something will be lost in the conversion. The relation between the higher realm and its transposition in the lower is likewise abstract. The correspondence between the universals and particulars is not exact or absolute, but rather symbolic and sacramental. The thing signified descends in substance so that the lower partakes of the higher as the higher reproduces itself imperfectly, in the lower.

Another excellent description of transposition is given by Thomas Peters (1998:228),

Viewed from above, a transposition is seen as a complicated phenomenon expressed through simplified signs. For example, a dry mouth can signify simple thirst, but it can also signify much more complicated emotional states such as extreme fear. Viewed from 'below', a dry mouth is a dry mouth. Viewed from 'above', the observer can discern the complicated emotions that may have produced the dry mouth. 'Spiritual things are spiritually discerned,' writes Lewis.

The inconceivable, the abstract, the metaphysical and supernatural, to Lewis, are comprehended by means of myth. Thomas Peters (1998:77) considers this best demonstrated in Lewis' children's books, the *Narnia Chronicles*, where they are, perhaps to be recognised as his best conveyance of the Christian message via the medium of myth. Scholar Peter Schakel, in his book entitled *Reason and Imagination in C. S. Lewis* (1984), makes the theme of his book focus upon the synthesis in Lewis' works between his rationality and his mystical imagination. The synthesis is formed in Lewis' writings, according to Schakel, in myth (1984:181). Paul S. Fiddes, in his article entitled, C. S. Lewis the myth maker (Walker 1998:132), renders a lucid demonstration of how myth and Christianity relate,

As Lewis summarises the matter in a later essay, 'incarnation transcends myth. The heart of Christianity is a myth which is also a fact...By becoming fact, it does not cease to be a myth...' In both the earlier and later accounts, we notice two intertwined aspects: the myth has become fact, but the story of the fact still retains the imaginative power and effect of a myth. The pagan myths are 'good dreams' sown by God in preparation for the gospel, but when we awake from the dreams into the daylight of the Great Fact, we must receive it with the same imaginative embrace which we accord to the dream myth.

Lewis scholarship appears to present the above conception of myth and transposition in a uniform and consistent way. J. R. Christopher writes that there is at present a vast reservoir of Lewis scholarship available, some in favour, and others more negatively inclined towards Lewis' Christian

writings (Walker 1998:216). None at all, it would seem, negate the present writer's interpretation of Lewis' treatment of the above three themes.