POSTMODERN EPISTEMOLOGY

AND THE CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS OF C. S. LEWIS

BY

DONALD NEIL WILSON

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

PHILOSOPHIAE DOCTOR

In the Faculty of Theology University of Pretoria
The study was done through the Cape Town Baptist Seminary

SUPERVISOR: Prof C Wethmar
CO-SUPERVISOR: Dr K Roy

SEPTEMBER 2005

i

I, Donald Neil Wilson, declare that the thesis, which I hereby submit for the degree PHILOSOPHIAE DOCTOR at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not been previously submitted by me for a degree at another university/institution.

SIGNED_____

   DATE_____

 PLACE: THE CAPE TOWN BAPTIST SEMINARY

ABSTRACT

Epistemology in its contemporary post-modern ethos is generally believed to be inseparably hinged upon language. This of course ensures a major paradigm shift in the disciplined human conceptions of reality. It has been stated and is widely acknowledged that the Kantian *Noumenal barrier* has, in this recent shift, been proved to be looming far closer than it was ever previously considered. This new barrier to the world of 'objective absolutes' comprises a barrier of semantics and syntax, and calls for a radical restructuring of all the human sciences. There is surely no discipline in the humanities that can claim immunity to this colossal shift in epistemology, and theology (particularly of the Evangelical variety) is no exception to the rule.

The impact of post-modern epistemological assumption upon contemporary Evangelicalism presents to those who adhere to this school's position, a profound challenge. Conservative Christians, who hold to the propositional universality and the objectivity of biblical truth, find in the post-modern ethos little sympathy and no rational justification granted for their 'metaphysical objectivity'. A major challenge therefore to Evangelical Christianity at the present time is this: Is there, in the light of the challenge of post-modern epistemology, any reasonable justification for continuing to adhere to the evangelical claim that God has spoken in unchanging propositional terms that are universally valid and binding? It would seem that in this regard many evangelicals are feeling pressured. Evidence of the pressure of this challenge can readily be found either in the growing contemporary evangelical tendency towards advocating a more cooperative attitude to the post-modern ethos, or in the reactionary theology of schools of thought like the Spiritual Warfare Movement.

The writings of Clive Staples Lewis (1898 – 1963) have been proven effective in the countering of negative challenges to Christian faith for the past sixty years. Lewis, as an apologist, in the opinion of many intellectual searchers, positively and convincingly countered modernistic objections to faith in his own time. Modernistic assumptions prevailed in the Western world in

iii

Lewis' day that tended to discredit a rational belief in the supernatural. Lewis was widely held to be an effective apostle to counter this modernistic scepticism.

It is the conviction of the present writer that C. S. Lewis apologetics can be just as effectively utilised today in addressing *post-modern* challenges, as it was fifty years ago used to answer the questions raised by modernism. Lewis in all of his Christian writings, reveals an underlying epistemology that I believe (because it is based firmly upon Christian orthodoxy), has stood the test of time. The apologetics of C. S. Lewis may serve to answer post-modern challenges just as rationally as it did modernism.

In this thesis, Lewis' underlying epistemology will be examined. This will comprise the first part of my work. The second part of the thesis deals with the post-modern epistemological challenge to Evangelicalism as a world-view. The final part of this thesis consists of a dialogue between the most common post-modern challenges to evangelical thinking, and rationally compelling answers thereto that are found in Lewis' writings.

<u>TEN KEY TERMS</u>

Accommodated Rationality.
Categorical Imperative.
Epistemology.
Myth.
Noumenal Barrier.
Semantics.
Supernatural.
Syntax.
Thing in Itself.
Transposition.

<u>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</u>

TO MELODY, PAUL, AND DANIELLE

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The following paragraph, written by educational theorist Henry Giroux, encapsulates the essential spirit of what is now termed epistemological Post-modernism (Cahoone 1996:693),

> The enlightenment notion of reason needs to be reformulated within a critical pedagogy. First, educators need to be sceptical regarding any notion of reason that purports to reveal the truth by denying its own historical construction and ideological principles. Reason is not innocent and any viable notion of critical pedagogy cannot exercise forms of authority that emulate totalising forms of reason that appear to be beyond criticism and dialogue. This suggests that we reject claims to objectivity in favor of partial epistemologies that recognise the historical and socially constructed nature of their own knowledge claims and methodologies.

The sentiment expressed in the above paragraph by a leading contemporary thinker in American educational circles would have provoked immediate shock and resistance in academic circles perhaps less than thirty years ago. Giroux is suggesting that education strategy needs to jettison formerly held ideas of absolute truth and objective reality, and replace such considerations with alternative models of individual and subjective reality construction. Such sentiments as this are generally accepted as viable in many education circles today (McCallum 1996:10). Post-modernism is now firmly entrenched as the *currently respectable* mind-set of those academically '*in the know'.* The entire post-modern world-view is, in the final analysis, based upon an epistemological assumption. In other words, this world-view begins from, and is confined to, in all of its investigative considerations, the interpretive functioning of the human mind (Lyotard 1984:14). The traditional Western objective conceptions of duality, i.e. right and wrong, true and false, physical and mental are today rejected by many

1

thinkers, as merely being culturally conditioned and subjectively imposed value judgments. The post-modern emphasis lies not with any hypothetical objective 'absolutes' that humanity is to harness or adhere to, but with the subjective experience of the human mind as it functions within its inescapable linguistic, environmental, cultural, and psychological context. Post-modern epistemology has influenced all of the major areas of contemporary thinking i.e. Education, Psychotherapy, Law, the Physical Sciences, and to a large degree, Religion. McCallum describes post-modernism thus (1996:12),

> Now in the late twentieth century, we are caught up in a revolution that will likely dwarf Darwinism in its impact on every aspect of thought and culture: *postmodernism.* Unlike Darwinism, postmodernism isn't a distinct set of doctrines or truth claims. It's a *mood* - a view of the world characterised by a deep distrust of reason...It's a *methodology* - a completely new way of analysing ideas. For all its ideas and advocates, postmodernism is also a *movement* - a fresh onslaught on truth that brings a more or less cohesive approach to literature, history, politics, education, law, sociology, linguistics, and virtually every other discipline including science. And it is ushering in a cultural metamorphosis - transforming every idea of everyday life.

The impact that the above world-view is having or has had upon contemporary thinking in all of the academic disciplines is of late probably the most written about thesis topic of the academic humanities. It may well be true as some suggest, that post-modernism signifies the end of Western civilisation as we know it, and it may well, for all we know at present, be the mind-set for a new world order. It may, on the other hand, be yet just another phase in shifting sands of philosophical tastes that will eventually die away and, as the pendulum swings,

be replaced by yet another dominating world-view. Although it is still far too soon to know how great the impact of post-modernism may yet become, it is vital to understand, that it cannot - especially by the Evangelical Christian community - be ignored. In the light of this, I therefore make no apology for producing yet another thesis on the subject of post-modernism's impact upon the Christian faith. I believe that there are soteriological issues that are raised by post-modern theory that simply must be addressed in order to justify the continuity of orthodox Christian thinking.

This dissertation will focus, as one of its aims, upon the impact that post-modern thinking has had upon the discipline of Christian theology - and more specifically, on Christian apologetics. In Christianity, especially in its evangelical form, a definite and inbuilt epistemology is presupposed from start to finish. What I mean by this is that it is possible and necessary for the human comprehension to attain a certain (albeit limited) objective understanding of absolute reality. Truth and falsehood, light and darkness, good and evil, for example, are all simply assumed by orthodoxy to be objectively comprehensible realities for all of humanity, all of the time. Absolutes exist outside of human subjectivity, it is believed, that need to be universally communicated by means of the propagation of the Christian message. If however, this above presupposed absolute is removed from Christian *kerugma*, then no matter how many times and ways Christianity is conceptualised, demythologised, or systematised anew by its academics and innovators, it ceases to be in essence the religion that is has been for the past two *millennia.* To put it another way, Christianity is, in its

3

theoretical form, based upon absolute assumptions, if these absolute assumptions are denied, then the historical theoretical content of Christianity stands completely ungrounded. McCallum writes (1996:202),

> You may have noticed that evangelicalism, like modernism, insists on consistency. Both evangelicals and modernists have historically believed in the use of reason, beginning with the law of non-contradiction: 'A is not non-A'. So, for instance, the Creator can't be a personal God and an impersonal force at the same time. By taking the same stand as modernism in this particular area - though not in others - evangelical Christians have placed themselves in the direct line of fire of the growing post-modern consensus.

Epistemological post-modernism flatly denies any human comprehension of objective absolutes whatsoever (Cahoone 1996:21). In the light of this fact, it is undeniable that, on epistemological grounds, postmodernism and Evangelical Christianity is utterly irreconcilable as bedfellows. Strangely enough though, many Evangelical thinkers have attempted in many ingenious ways, to ford this unbridgeable chasm (e.g. Swartz and Codrington, *South African Baptist Journal of Theology* 1999:121). To the present writer's understanding however, there can never be the possibility of a happy coexistence with these two opposing world-views. When all of the academic subtleties have been swept away, one is faced with an *either-or* dilemma; if the post-modern subjective approach to epistemology is granted, then consequentially, Christian *kerugma* is of no objective validity at all (Cahoone 1996:531).

It is with the above dilemma in mind, that this dissertation is written. The epistemological claims that are presupposed by the post-modern mind-set have

proven at very least corrosive to many formally and confidently held assumptions in the Evangelical Church movement (McCallum 1996:199). Ontological Relativism, that which is the inevitable consequence of post-modern epistemology, is presently influencing the Church's very approach to evangelism and its relationship towards other faiths. Doctrines such as *human depravity*, *vicarious atonement*, *eternal retributi*on, and *special revelation*, can all be denied or at very least, radically reinterpreted (Shorto 1997:14), once their absolute and objective foundations are removed (McGrath 1993:109). The result of this epistemological shift in Evangelical Christian circles is becoming increasingly evident. Thinking Christians are being compelled to become less confessional and more existential in their religious focus (Brooke 1998:35). Mysticism and the practice of occult methodologies are in many cases now widely emphasised in churches at the expense of doctrinal content. What is known generally as, *Spiritual Warfare,* and *Positive Confessional Praying*, are now, in evangelical circles, widely preached and practiced (McCallum 1996:199). The Evangelical reaction to the post-modern epistemology has also tended towards a far less aggressive and definitive form of evangelism. Inter-faith dialogue and 'bridge-building' is a prime example of the new post-modern approach to the Christian religion (Brooke 1998:36). It would seem to be the case, that, as scholar Dennis McCallum states (1996:13), Christian theology, having been denied its native objectivity by post-modern epistemology, now faces an identity crisis.

The scholar and Christian writer Clive Staples Lewis (1898-1963) wrote quite extensively on many different topics (Literary criticism, poetry, science fiction, fantasy, as well as a number of children's stories) in his lifetime. It is however in his specifically Christian writings, that I am convinced, much benefit for Christian apologetics may yet be discovered. Lewis, an Anglican layman, who admittedly was never systematic in his presentation of the Christian message (Sayer 1997:xxii), approached the communication of the gospel message with a robust rationality. He utilised the same instruments (inference, induction, and syllogistic deduction), and applied the very same frames of logical reference to the spiritual realm that he did to objects in the physical realm. It may be suggested that Lewis, a product of his own modernist times, has nothing truly contributory to share on the epistemological issue that is fundamental to the entire post-modern challenge to Christian evangelical thinking. I believe however, that he has. Underlining and supporting every page that Lewis ever wrote on the subject of Christianity, there is a foundational assumption, an epistemology. This epistemology, when it is pointed out, is able to better explain the texture, rhythm and structure of Lewis' methodology in his approach to apologetics. It is my intention in this dissertation to *extract* from the many C. S. Lewis Christian writings, the epistemology that underlies and motivates his apologetic work. My intended extraction will by no means be of an exhaustive nature, but will hopefully serve the purpose of the present project adequately and effectively. It is truly fascinating to read how Lewis consistently and rationally bases all of his apologetic contentions upon this epistemological foundation. As far as I am

aware, my own particular approach to the works of C. S. Lewis in this thesis is unprecedented. The second part of this dissertation will address the post-modern epistemology as it is applied to Christian theology. With the use of Lewis' model that I have extracted from his works, I will then engage the post-modern theological epistemology in a dialogue where, hopefully, support for the rational and objective approach to theology may be vindicated, or at very least, given credence. It may be necessary at this stage, to make very clear to my reader the humble objective behind this dissertation. By no stretch of the imagination do I consider the writings of C. S. Lewis to have been written as *proof* for the truth of the Christian message. I think that Lewis understood perfectly well (as I think I do) that the Gospel may only be grasped by the Divinely ordained instrumentality of *saving faith*. I have therefore approached this presentation with the desired intention of merely presenting to the evangelical academic world, a single possible solution to the dilemma that has been stirred up by the post-modern epistemological challenge.

Before I proceed further into this topic, I am aware that it should never be taken for granted that my reader automatically and correctly understands my particular use of terminology. This, is I have found, is one of the major problems that I personally have encountered in my reading of many academic papers, the comprehension of terminology is so often assumed by the writer. It is therefore essential that I strive to ensure as much verbal lucidity as possible at the very onset of my dissertation. The term *epistemology* perhaps, is a case in point. My

definition of *epistemology* is as follows. The term itself is derived from the Greek *episteme,* (i.e. knowledge, understanding), and the Greek word *logos* (i.e. conception), hence the word means, the science of knowing. It is this uncomplicated way that I use this word here. Epistemology is the particular branch of philosophical inquiry that asks the questions that are absolutely fundamental to any science whatsoever - the inquiry into the very act of comprehension itself. Epistemology is always therefore introspective in nature - it is the study of the student - the examination of the examiner (Urmson 1983:92). The Standard Oxford Dictionary definition of the term is as follows (1964:408), 'Theory of the method or grounds of knowledge.' *Post-modern* epistemology, is, in the light of this definition, simply the term used in order to describe the approach to human understanding that is resulting from, and utilised by, that particular school of philosophical approach. A more complete definition will hopefully help establish a firm foundation for the dissertation's dialogue that will take place in part three of this work. J. O. Urmson, in his, *Encyclopedia of Western Philosophy and Philosophers* (1983:92) writes,

> There is a wide-ranging, loosely knit set of problems concerning such notions as those of knowing, perceiving, feeling sure, guessing, being mistaken, remembering, finding out, proving, inferring, establishing, corroborating, wondering, reflecting, imagining, dreaming and so on. This part of philosophy is often called the Theory of Knowledge, or Epistemology - the latter word deriving from the Greek Episteme = knowledge or science. Some of the problems revolve around the notion of a science, in the sense in which we take astronomy to be a science, but astrology not. A fairly typical problem of this kind is the problem why in pure mathematics there are conclusive proofs of theorems, when no such demonstrable certainties can be found or even looked for in, for example, history or

medicine. It would be absurd for a mathematician to rest content with mere plausible conjectures or even with highly probable hypothesis. Scientists of other sorts seem not to be in a position to aspire higher than high probabilities. We incline to say that a body of truth ranks as a real science only when these are conclusively established; and then we find ourselves forced to say that, judged by this rigorous standard, even physics and chemistry are not really sciences; and this conclusion conflicts badly with our ordinary ideas.

Perhaps Donald Palmer gives an even more encapsulated definition of the term in his college textbook on philosophy entitled, *Does the Centre Hold?* (1995:38).

> Epistemology is theory of knowledge. These are the big questions on epistemology: What is knowledge? What is the difference between opinion and knowledge? Does knowledge require certainty? What are the limits of knowledge? Is knowledge in fact possible? The word knowledge perhaps seems a bit highfalutin. Still, we are familiar with it, and we certainly use the verb, 'to know' many times throughout any day.
>
> * Do you know what time it is?
> * I used to know that word in French, but now I've forgotten it.
> * She knew all the material on the test.
> * We didn't know we would arrive today.
>
> In ordinary discourse, what do we mean by 'know' when we say things like this? I take it that when we say that someone knows something, we mean more or less that he or she could come up with a right answer on demand. But justifiably or unjustifiably, philosophers have not been satisfied with this account of the meaning of 'knowledge.

Hence the existence of the branch of philosophy termed, epistemology. Apart from the possibility of a reader misunderstanding my use of the term

epistemology, I have no other words that I think at this stage, need to be explained. The use of technical *academise*, I have endeavored to avoid in the writing of this thesis. It will hopefully be clearly evident that my subject (not necessarily my work!) is of such grave importance that I believe it is wrong to cloud the issues here discussed in murky and ambiguous language. Lewis himself had something to say on this subject of incomprehensible and terminology laden academic language. In an address to preachers of the Christian message he says (*Timeless at Heart* 1987:25),

> To conclude - you must translate every bit of your theology into the vernacular. This is very troublesome and it means that you can say very little in half an hour, but it is essential. It is also the greatest service to your own thought. I have come to the conviction that if you cannot translate your thought into uneducated language, then your thoughts were very confused. Power to translate is the test of having really understood one's own meaning. A passage from some theological work for translation into the vernacular ought to be a compulsory paper in every ordination examination.

In spite of the fact that I intend to write as clearly as possible, I do however make the assumption that my reader is familiar with the theoretical context and has a fair grounding in the theoretical paradigm in which I am writing. It will be noted that I do not spend a great deal of time defining terminology or explaining my chain of reasoning in any great detail. I assume that the reader will be adequately aware of the present dilemma that is facing the evangelical school of thought in the twenty-first century, and is able to follow the structure of my argument.

The structure of this work consists of three parts:

a) Part one will deal with the epistemology of C. S. Lewis. In this section I will extract from all of his Christian writings (although certainly not exhaustively!), the epistemological presuppositions that support his apologetic approach. Lewis bases his entire apologetics approach upon the assumption that human consciousness is able to comprehend in a rational manner, a reality that exists beyond the natural realm - the supernatural.

b) Part two will discuss the particular effect that post-modern epistemology is having on the Western world at the turn of the twenty-first century and in particular, the impact that this mind-set is having upon evangelical Christianity. Also in this section, in order to prepare the reader for the formulated debate in part three on the dissertation, I will supply a description of post-modern epistemological fundamentals that will be adequate for a sound comprehension of the debate in part three.

c) Part three will contain a dialogue between five epistemological assumptions of post-modernism that are directly impacting upon evangelical Christianity today. These are, the denial of objective truth, reason as construct, the post-modern linguistic prison of semantics and syntax, the post-modern taboo of religious dogmatism, and the equal validity of all religions as social constructs. In this section of the

dissertation, these points will be raised and critically evaluated in the light of the extracted epistemological approach to apologetics in the writings of C. S. Lewis.

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 communicatable 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

14

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

16

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 intend 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   <u>THIS WORK WILL FOCUS ON THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL STRUCTURE THAT UPHOLDS AND MOTIVATES LEWIS' WORKS</u>

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 <u>An Uncompromising Acceptance of the Reality of the Supernatural Realm.</u>

Whereas much modern theology struggles to reconcile the Kantian distinction between *noumena* and *phenomena* (Bubner *1997:17),*

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, Plontinus, 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   <u>A Confidence in and the Utilisation of the Logical Faculties to arrive at Rationally Induced and Deduced Conclusions</u>.

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 Magdelen 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

31

> 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   <u>EVIDENCE FOR THE REALITY OF A SUPERNATURAL REALM</u>

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   <u>THE ENIGMA OF RATIONAL THOUGHT</u>

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

36

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 illusionary. 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

38

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 tablature.

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

40

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, <u>Miracles</u>, deals with the enigma of rationality in the first five chapters.

ii) The following shorter works deal especially with this subject:

   <u>Bulverism.</u> This paper is found in the volume, <u>First and Second Things</u>.

   <u>De Futilitate</u>. This paper is found in the volume, <u>Christian Reflections</u>.

   <u>Dogma and the Universe</u>. This paper is found in the volume, <u>God in the Dock.</u>

   <u>Is Theology Poetry?</u> This paper is to be found in the volume, <u>Screwtape Proposes a Toast.</u>

   <u>Religion without Dogma?</u> This paper is found in the volume, <u>Timeless at Heart.</u>

1.5.2 <u>THE ENIGMA OF THE CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVE</u>

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

43

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 in1943 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, of 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

48

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

49

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

50

(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. Jacque 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   <u>THE UNIVERSAL LURE OF *SEHNSUCHT*</u>

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

_____

<u>Lewis writings that especially deal with this subject</u>

i)   The introduction to the 1940 book, <u>*The Problem of Pain*</u> deals to a large extent with this subject.

ii)   The final chapter of Lewis' 1955 autobiography, <u>*Surprised by Joy*</u>, 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:*

       <u>*Historicism.*</u> This paper, originally delivered at a public debate, is to be found in the volume, <u>*Fern Seeds and Elephants.*</u>

       <u>*Religion Without Dogma?*</u> This paper can be found in he volume entitled, <u>*Timeless at Heart*</u>.

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

54

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 Pilgrims' 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*, the 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   <u>THE RATIONALITY OF C. S. LEWIS</u>

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*

59

(*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

61

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

63

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 relagated 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 a*bandoned* 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 <u>C. S. LEWIS' RATIONAL APPROACH TO THEOLOGY</u>

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

72

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 <u>Means by which the supernatural is comprehended</u>

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.

75

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 *servant*s. 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.

76

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 psychical 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

79

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

84

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 T*ransposition.* 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* (<u>Screwtape Proposes a Toast </u>1977:75). This address has been much used in the above discussion.
An address given entitled, *Behind the Scenes* (<u>Christian Reunion and Other Essays</u> 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?* (<u>Screwtape Proposes a Toast </u>1977:41), deals with the content of theological language.
An address given entitled, *Dogma and the Universe* (<u>God in the Dock </u>1990:27), argues in favor of a rational universe, and the corresponding reason in human awareness.
The paper, *Myth Became Fact* (<u>God in the Dock </u>1990:39), is an address given which considers the phenomenon of mythology and its relation to actuality.
The paper, *Religion without Dogma?* (<u>Timeless at He</u>art 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* (<u>First and Second Things </u>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*? (<u>Christian Reflections</u> 1991:56), deals with the priority of religious experience over the sensual.
The address entitled, *The Language of Religion* (<u>Christian Reflections </u>1991:164), points out the mythological content in religious language.   Lewis' science fiction trilogy, <u>Out of the Silent Planet,</u> <u>Perelandra,</u> and <u>That Hideous Strength</u>, all convey the Christian message in mythological terms.
The children's books <u>The Narnia Chronicles</u>, were written in order to convey Christian thought to children using the language and symbolism of mythology (See Peters 1998:76).
Lewis' 1947 work <u>The Great Divorce </u>(1977), attempts to communicate concepts of Divine retribution in a language that is mythological.
The 1963 book <u>Prayer Letters to Malcolm </u>(1977:74), in chapter 14, deals with religious imagery in prayer and its mythological basis.
The entire 1947 book, <u>Miracles</u> (1990:85), involves the essential presence of reason in a world of enigma.
Lewis' 1955 autobiography, <u>Surprised by Joy </u>(1971:170) devotes a chapter to the impact of mythology upon his own life and conversion.
The allegorical 1934 work <u>The Pilgrim's Regress </u>(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 (Heppe 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,

94

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

97

> 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, <u>*The Problem of Pain* </u>(1990:11), Lewis demonstrates how mythology was solidified in history by the Jewish people.
In his 1947 book, <u>*Miracles*</u>, 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 <u>*The Pilgrim's Regress*</u>, 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, <u>*Surprised by Joy*</u>, 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. Tolkein.
In the 1946 fantasy*, <u>The Great Divorce </u>*(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 <u>*Mere Christianity* </u>(1989:103), Lewis writes in the last chapter of how human existence if 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* (<u>*Screwtape proposes a Toast* </u>1977:75). This entire paper eloquently covers our present topic in a lucid and complete way.
The paper entitled, *The Grand Miracle* (<u>*God in the Dock* </u>1990:56), explains how Christianity fulfils and gives substance to, many mythical themes.
The paper entitled, *Myth became Fact* (<u>*God in the Dock* </u>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?* (<u>*Timeless at Heart* </u>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 perceptional 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 signifies 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.

<u>PART TWO</u>

POST-MODERN EPISTIMOLOGICAL THINKING AND ITS EFFECT UPON

EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANITY

2.   THE POST-MODERN MINDSET

David Tomlinson in his work, *The Post Evangelical*, encapsulated very effectively the relevance of post-modernism to the evangelical school of Christianity. He writes (1995:6),

> My thesis is simple: that post-evangelicals tend to be people who identify more with the more tentative post-modernity (the culture of the post-modern) than with modernity; their belief combines faith and doubt, commitment and enquiry, confession and self criticism.

What Tomlinson says if correctly understood, explains much of contemporary evangelical Christianity's seemingly often arbitrary approach to Christian revelation sources and methodologies (Tomlinson 1995:6). Post-Modernism is the prevailing philosophy of our times. It is a 'pendulum swing' reaction to the reductionist confidence to knowledge that exists in the philosophy of modernism (Cahoone 1996:14). At the turn of the twenty-first century, post-modernism is both widespread and deeply influential in our society (McCallum 1996:27). There is no major field of study that has not in the past twenty years or so, been profoundly effected by this new world-view, and Christian theology is no exception (Brooke 1998:32). What is Post-Modernism? McCallum, in his important work, *The Death of Truth*, supplies the following definition (1996:12),

> Now in the late twentieth century, we are caught up in a revolution that will likely dwarf Darwinism in its impact upon every aspect of thought and culture: post-modernism. Unlike Darwinism, post-modernism isn't a distinct set of doctrines or

truth claims. It is a *mood* - a view of the world characterised by a deep distrust of reason.

This distrust of reason is firmly based upon the conviction that all human self-awareness is linguistically and culturally bound up in an inescapable subjectivity (McCallum 1996:27). John McGowan in his work entitled, *Post-modernism and its Critics* (1991:4) supplies a clear definition of this mindset. He writes,

> Willful modernist self-exclusion, the claim to stand outside, is only a delusion; the post-modernist insists that everything is included (within social reality), that nothing can achieve the autonomy or distance in which the modernists found their last defense against all-encompassing capitalism.

Reality, in other words, is an entirely subjective matter. Each culture to this mind-set (even sub-cultures i.e. gender, age group, socio-economic class) possesses within itself, its own system of signification and rationality, this is fondly termed by post-modernists, *paradigm*. A self-conscious individual therefore, being culture-bound and able only to perceive objects through the spectacles of subjective conditioning, exists as the *constructor* of his/her own conception of reality. Reality, in other words, is *configuratively* perceived (Taylor 1992:133). Truth, to the post-modernist means primarily, '*truth for me'.* Jerome Bruner, in his book, *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds,* writes (1986:195),

> The moment that one abandons the idea that 'the world' is there once for all and immutable, and substitutes for it the idea that what we take as the world is itself

114

no more or less than a stipulation couched in a symbol system, then the shape of the discipline alters radically. And we are, at last, in a position to deal with the myriad forms that reality can take - including realities created by story, as well as those created by science.

Bruner is optimistic as he considers the possibility of a coming society where traditional concepts of reality are replaced by the subjectivity of multiple realities. Post-modern innovators are working hard to bring this about (Giroux 1991:45). This conception of '*myriad forms of reality*' does not, to the post-modern mindset, invalidate inter-cultural communication however. According to post-modern epistemology, when some semblance of inter-cultural activity is necessary for the purpose of solidifying a working consensus among culturally divergent individuals, it is to be constructed by the varying cultures in an *inter-subjective* manner by prior agreement. This means that in any consensus-seeking conference of differing cultural viewpoints, each individual world-view and value system needs to be considered as being equally valid and made compatible to all the others. This, it is claimed, must always be the case, as no human being lives outside of his/her own *solipsist monad* of experience. '*Truth claims*' are never to be '*proven*' but rather *deconstructed* for the sake of inter-cultural cooperation. The traditional conception of there being a possibility of one particular person's paradigm holding to any objective truth that exists somewhere '*out there'* is flatly resisted by post-modernists as *metanarrative*. In fact, such claims to possessing an access to any true

objectivity are frowned upon as being *imperialistic* and *insensitive* towards other differing world-views (Shorto 1997:237). Academic post-modernism has the ideological goal of ultimately eliminating any form of exclusivity and intellectual domination of one culture over another (Lyotard 1984:10). Jacques Derrida has termed such arrogance *logocentricity* (Derrida 1974:10). Educationist Henry A Giroux, who typifies the above post-modern academic mindset in the present American education system writes (Giroux 1991:49),

> The Enlightenment notion of *reason* needs to be reformulated within a critical pedagogy. First, educators need to be sceptical regarding the notion that purports to reveal the truth by denying its own historical construction and ideological principles...This suggests that we reject claims to objectivity in favour of partial epistemologies that recognise the historical and socially constructed nature of knowledge claims and methodologies.

Contemporary society has been influenced by the above mind-set in no superficial way. It should therefore come as no surprise that post-modern influences are to be discovered already operating within contemporary Christian and even evangelical theology. McCallum writes (1996:202),

> Let's be clear: Post-modernists aren't against religion. They are only against religious teaching that holds to objective truth and the usefulness of reason. Religion based upon personal experience and 'what's true for me' is perfectly compatible with the post-modern world-view. But once reason is rejected, truth in the objective sense must be rejected as well. What use is a 'truth' if the opposite, or 'anti theoretical' position is also true?

116

For any Christian denomination to insist upon any single '*correct'* interpretation of a dogmatic position, is in many intellectual circles today frowned upon as being '*logocentric imperialism.'* American theologian Mark Taylor believes that there are as many valid interpretations of Scripture as there are readers (Cahoone 1996:523). With such a philosophy reigning in contemporary academia and *'filtering down'* to mass consciousness through the media, art and education (Swartz, *South African Baptist Journal of Theology*: 1999:122), one can only anticipate some definite and significant effects upon contemporary Christian thinking. The effect of post-modern influence on contemporary religious thought can be observed many times, in the Church's seemingly uncritical acquiescence towards teachings such as the present *Spiritual Warfare Movement* and Inter-Faith dialogue (Swartz *South African Baptist Journal of Theology*: 1999:120). The very fact that such a paradigm shift in Christian academic thinking, resulting in the uncritical evangelical acceptance of many recent doctrinally divergent trends, can only be explained in the light of the prevailing *zeitgeist* of our era (McCallum1996: 204). The influence of post-modern epistemology upon contemporary Christianity can be demonstrated in three major areas. These three major areas have impacted upon the dogmatic confidence of the Baptist Union of South Africa and it is from this context that the present writer writes from personal experience.

2.1   The Post-modern Emphasis upon Subjective experience over Objective Theological Dogmatism

It may well be argued that the appeal to ontological subjectivity goes much further back than post-modernism - it goes back to *Kierkegaardian existentialism*, or even further back - to *Cartesian duality* (Palmer 1996:57). It may be argued therefore that philosophical subjectivism chronologically precedes the epistemology of post-modernism by many years. It needs to be realised however, that much ontological existentialism owes its contemporary acceptance and philosophical justification in our present time, to the post-modern appeal to the cultural and linguistic conditioning of every human individual (Cahoone 1996:20). Post-modernism is, in a very real sense, *a justification* of existentialism. But there is a scientific as well as a purely philosophical justification for such a subjectivist epistemological position. Walter Anderson, in his book entitled, *Reality isn't What It Used to Be* (1991:196) offers two examples from recent neuro-physiology research that he claims indicates effectively that objective perception is not real,

> 1. Kittens raised in environments devoid of vertical visual cues have brains that are devoid of regions that respond to such cues, and behaviourally, these kittens cannot be conditioned to respond to reward triggers that are vertically oriented.

2. Subjects who have lost or never had neuronal connections between their right and left cortex have behaviours that indicate they don't know why they are doing what they are doing...Subjects with damage to the visual cortex are essentially blind, yet they can react to things in their visual field while denying that they see anything - a phenomenon called 'blind sight'.

These are all used to illustrate that we might be perceiving things that are different from 'objective reality' and different from what other people see because our brains are wired differently.

This post-modern epistemology, increasingly being *backed* by contemporary academic and scientific consensus (McCallum 1996:48), insists that an individual's subjective experience will always precede and regulate one's rationality. Campolo writes concerning this outlook (1987:88), 'Truth is not composed of facts, rather it gives meaning to facts.' Individual human self-awareness to the post-modernist, is the '*launching pad'* for all construction of meaning. This approach to epistemology surely impacts profoundly upon evangelical Christian theology. An example of this impact may be read in the writings of Spiritual Warfare theology teacher, Evelyn Christenson. In her book *Battling the Prince of Darkness* (1991), she claims that it is ultimately subjective human conceptions of truth that will be the deciding factor in the *Parousia* of Christ (1991:177).

2.2   The Post-modern Appeal to Pragmatism

Post-modernism is not so much concerned with truth as with *pragmatics* (McCallum 1996:177). The positive outcome of a particular event is considered to be the optimum purpose for any rational undertaking. Whether a proposition is considered *consistent,* or *absurd*, is to post-modernism, of secondary importance to whether a proposition is *helpful*, or *constructive* (Cahoone 1996:696). Because it is believed by this mind-set, that any appeal to an objective rationality amounts to an imperialism of *logocentricity* (Derrida 1974:26), it is argued that the final '*court of appeal'* in deciding any proposition's validity is to be voted upon the grounds of its usefulness (Giroux 1991:47). Ideas in post-modernism are used to *equip* rather than to, *prove* or to *inform*. Education therefore, is considered chiefly as an instrument of *empowerment* (Giroux 1991:55).

2.3   The Quasi-scientific Linguistics of Post-modernism

Post-modernism as a mind-set, tends to frown upon the self-confident definition and systematisation of reality that has been practiced by modernism, and calls for a more agnostic and mystical approach to phenomena in general (Cahoone 1996:14). In spite of this rejection of modernistic scientific methodology, post-modern innovators tend to utilise the very same scientific terminology in

order to express, describe and vindicate their own particular views (McCallum 1996:58). Universities around the world, having been influenced by the post-modern world-view, are pressured to relax the stricter modernistic standards of scientific definition (Giroux 1991:45). Higher learning authorities have begun to recognise certain fields of study as being academically respectable that would previously have been considered void of any content for the purpose of objective scrutiny. Astrologers and traditional *sangomas* are, in many quarters, now looked upon as practicing '*professionals'* who are merely offering alternative approaches to the traditional western methodologies (Bruner 1986:195). This trend has afforded accreditation to many previously discredited fields of study. McCallum writes (1996:12),

> (Post-modernism) is a completely new way of analysing ideas...A fresh onslaught on truth that brings a more or less cohesive approach to literature, history, politics, education, law sociology, linguistics, and virtually every other discipline including science. And it is ushering in a cultural *metamorphosis* - transforming every area of everyday life as it spreads through education, movies, and other media.

The shift from modernism to post-modernism - the radical change of attitude that has taken place in the academic world, has enabled mystic and anti-objective world-views to utilise scientific jargon and pose as objectively verifiable systems of thought, while at the same

time, denouncing by their very nature, any possible objective scrutiny of its propositional content (McCallum 1996:26).

2.4   Post-Modern Impact upon Spiritual Thought

The major shift in academic thinking over the past thirty years has obviously impacted significantly upon Christian thought as well as spiritual thought in general. A new spirituality has found worldwide acceptance in the present era - especially in our own Western culture, this is commonly admitted (McCallum1996: 221). This shift in spirituality is not any one set of spiritual propositions being an influence *per se*, but rather a new attitude towards spirituality (Chandler 1987:27). This new spiritual tendency has influenced the Western mind so successfully for two main reasons.

Firstly, in the last forty years of the twentieth century, migration, transportation, and communications technology has tended to '*shrink'* the world into what has been termed the '*global village'*. Western cities like London, New York and Frankfurt are now multi-cultured '*melting pots'* where ethnic, racial, and religious people share with other communities, the very same day-to-day environment. With the Western world facing this radical population change over only a few short decades, the need for inter-cultural tolerance and harmony has become essential to the survival of

society (Groothuis 1986:132). Nationalist, religious, and racial exclusivism can no longer be tolerated in this new, multi-cultural world. Universal harmony is regarded as the imperative for the New World Order (Cahoone 1996:475). One of the products resulting from the call for an inter-culturalism, has been the success of the New Age Movement. It is the synthesis of Western individualism and Eastern monism where all can be one, and one can be all (Chandler 1987:17). In this mind-set, all forms of religious dogmatism are considered subordinate to the underlying spirituality that validates what is believed to be the goal of true religion (Chandler 1987:17). The appeal of this new spirituality is towards syncretism and inter-faith dialogue, rather than the aggressive, proselytising exclusivity of traditional Western spirituality.

The second reason for this widespread acceptance of the paradigm shift upon the Western spiritual mind is due to the human existential cry for significance and purpose in a world subjected to atheistic materialism. Since the mid-nineteenth century, the traditional Christian cosmology has been by many largely rejected, and an exclusively empiricist, scientific approach solely adhered to (Cahoone 1996:11). This has led to the world-view of a materialistic reductionism. In this particular philosophy, humanity is regarded as merely another material substance - a highly evolved species of

animal that only possesses true significance on the political and economic level. This world-view has left humanity with a spiritual void - a hunger for significance and purpose that is beyond the mere material. Groothuis writes (1986:41),

> No culture is able to survive a steady diet of atheism...We seek transcending meaning, purpose and value. Nihilism is unpalatable because it is unlivable. This 'firm foundation of unyielding despair' is not congenial to the human spirit.

The middle of the twentieth century experienced a paradigm shift in all the fields of knowledge (Cahoone 1996:667). The emergence of sub-atomic, post-Einstein science, as well as the iconoclasm of post-modern philosophy in response to it, have pointed to the absurdity of the scientific reductionism of the previous century (Cahoone 1996:12). Philosophical materialism as an academic world-view is now pretty much extinct. It is now generally held in intellectual circles, that we live in a world of impenetrable mystery. Quantum physics and black holes defy human rational explanation or even conception. The new science can feel quite at home with concepts such as pantheism (Groothuis 1986:95), and hold firmly to a belief in both the natural laws of the universe as well admits to the reality of profound mystery. The New Age Movement stands in full sympathy with the post-modern view of the world. It is itself not *supernatural*, in the Christian sense of the word, in that it is *monistic*

124

(Chandler 1988:28). Also, it is mystical - In other words, it seeks to *enquire* rather than *pontificate* axioms (Chandler 1988:31). The influence of a new and open spirituality can be recognised in a number of ways, as well as in all sectors of Western society - in science, in education, in the arts, and of course, in religion itself (Cahoone 1996:514).

This new religious shift has effected the Evangelical Christian Church in one of two ways;

i)   Firstly, there have been those who have tended to imbibe the prevailing *zeitgeist* into their own particular system thereby blending new spiritual concepts in with their own Christian belief system. The *Word of Faith Movement* has definitely done this to some extent. Smail, Walker and Wright have written an extensive research paper on the New Age and Neo Gnostic influences found in the teachings of the Word of Faith movement (Smail 1994:88). Dr. Richard Mayhue of the Master's Seminary, wrote an extensive article on this very subject, and it may be helpful to present a summary of his paper in order to illustrate as well as vindicate my present point with reference to a representative and credible scholar. Mayhue writes (*Sword and Trowel* , Vol III. 1999:10),

Francis Schaeffer, now with the Lord, wrote a book entitled, *The Great Evangelical Disaster*. In it, he decried the failure of the evangelical world to stand for truth as truth. David Wells who has written a landmark book for this decade entitled, *No room for Truth*, states that in the evangelical world there has been a shift from God to self as the focus of faith. George Marsden, a noted historian, warns evangelicals of the intrusion of humanism into the Church. Others speak of the Church becoming like the world, and undergoing secularisation. A striking observation was made by a mainline denominational spokesman who wrote: 'Evangelical theologians and pastors can learn from the mainline experience of placing relevance above truth.

Mayhue goes on to list four contemporary evangelical Church leaders who fit the above description of following the trend to place pragmatics above propositional truth (*Sword and Trowel* 1999:10),

We will focus on four well-known writers in the modern Church-growth movement in America, some of whom you may know of. Let me begin with George Barna. He is the George Gallop of the Church world, because he is forever taking a poll. And wherever the poll goes, George Barna wants the Church to go. He has written such books as *User Friendly Churches.* His most recent is, *The Second Coming of the Church,* which has nothing to do with eschatology. We see what he means by these words: 'Today's Church is incapable of responding to the present moral

126

crisis. It must re-invent itself or face virtual oblivion by the mid-twenty-first century.

Leith Anderson may be the least known of all the men referred to here. However, he is an immensely influential pastor among the 'mega churches' in America. He has written a book entitled, *A Church for the 21st Century*...Leith Anderson thinks that McDonald's and Wal-Mart are the best models for new churches. The shopping centre is the ideal. What he provides us with, is a man-centred approach. He advances a *needs-based* philosophy, and a consumer mentality.

The third author to be mentioned is Rick Warren. His best known book is *The Purpose Driven Church.* He says: 'Church growth occurs when the type of people in the community match the type of people that are already in the church, and they both match the type of person the pastor is'. Given time we could examine that statement, but it is enough to say that if it were true, then every city in the first century would have needed separate Jewish and Gentile congregations. It is, of course, untrue and unbiblical.

The fourth name is very well known, and that is the name Bill Hybels, senior pastor of Willow Creek church near Chicago. In *Rediscovering Church,* Bill Hybels explains that what worked with teens in the streets of Chicago in the early seventies (the hippie generation) is what has been done for adults in the eighties and nineties.

In all these writers, and many others there is almost nothing about being God-focused. There is little or nothing about going to the Word of God for our instructions as to what the Church ought

127

to be or how it ought to be built. There is only a consumer mentality, with little about sin and redemption.

Mayhue in this article, proceeds to render an explanation as to why the above trend is in fact so popular and so 'in tune' with our post-modern society (*Sword and Trowel* 1999:11),

The state of affairs just described may be elaborated in the following way. First, these writers and their churches elevate culture to be more important than Scripture, both in understanding the world around them and themselves. Secondly, they market image and appearance rather than reality...A great segment of evangelical churches (and a growing proportion of evangelical literature) is virtually embarrassed by biblical priorities. Here is a list of ways in which this is happening: 1.) There is an over-emphasis on man's reasoning and a corresponding under-emphasis on God's revelation in scripture. 2.) There is an over-emphasis on human need as defined by man and a corresponding under-emphasis on God's definition of man's need. 3.) There is an over-emphasis on the temporal side of life, and a corresponding under-emphasis on the eternal side. 4.) There is an over-emphasis on satisfying contemporary culture and a corresponding under-emphasis on God's pleasure.

When it comes to the late twentieth-century evangelical Church as a whole, techniques have replaced truth, style has supplanted substance.

128

ii)   The second evangelical response to the new approach to spirituality has been one of 'knee jerk', negative and defensive reaction (Horton 1992:265). Evangelical Christianity is seen by many within this camp to be under threat. The Church no longer holds the position in society of being the sole moral and religious advisor, and has in recent decades been 'demoted' to having to compete in a '*supermarket'* of numerous and varying religions. Evangelicalism has become an insignificant minority group within an indifferent and sometimes critical secular society. The response to this, by many threatened evangelicals, has been to reduce the world to a dualistic battleground where the Church is seen to be taking on the full onslaught of Satan's worldly minions (Horton 1992:227). The above response to the prevailing spirituality of our times was termed by writer Kim Riddelbarger (Horton 1992:265), *This Present Paranoia,* (obviously a tongue-in-cheek reference to Peretti's novel, *This Present Darkness*). It requires no stretch of the imagination to infer from the spiritual climate of our time, a major reason why the Spiritual Warfare Movement is so popular in many evangelical circles today (Horton 1992:227).

The term 'spiritual warfare' clearly suggests a polemic opposition of one (or more) party against another in a spiritual realm. Within the

term, *warfare*, a number of possible positions or meanings could be applied. *To wage a war* could mean to struggle in an aggressive or a defensive posture. It could mean an opposition between two or more parties or it could mean the rebellion of an inferior party against a superior or even the oppression of a superior over an inferior. A war may be physical or emotional, financial or verbal. Beyond these possible definitions of a warfare, one need not go in the defining of the spiritual warfare movement.

The spiritual warfare movement holds that open hostility existing between God and satanic forces is raging in the spiritual realm, and is profoundly and directly effecting the human condition. Godwin writes (1994:29), 'God wants us to have His Kingdom. Remember though, that Satan is still around and does not want us to have any more of God than we already have. The devil is doing his best to keep us from God's Kingdom.' Spiritual warfare teacher Rebecca Brown writes (1987:9),

> The war is upon us beloved. Whether we like it or not, there is no escaping it. The days are evil, and time is short. We ourselves are faced with a decision. Either we serve Satan, or we pick up the sword and fight - many of us will lay down our lives in the process.

The spiritual conflict therefore encompasses both realms, spiritual and natural. There is a comfortable consensus among the

protagonists of the movement on how this spiritual warfare came to be. Before the creation of the heavens and the earth, God created angelic beings (Arthur 1991:48). These were rational and self-aware creatures which existed in some composite spiritual form (Christenson 1991:21). Unanimously, the spiritual warfare teachers point to an angelic being by the name of Lucifer, a highly favoured cherub, as being the leader of a rebellion in the heavenly realm against the sovereign authority of God (Godwin 1994:7, Arthur 1991:38). The reason for this angelic rebellion is not clearly taught, but many suggest that satanic pride and jealousy were the root cause of its eruption (Arthur 1991:43, Green 1995:41). Citing Ezekiel 28:11-19 the teachers of the movement claim that Satan, along with a third of the angels were cast down to earth (Green 1995:84). It was then that humanity, which had been subsequently created by God to inhabit and rule the earth for His glory, was deceived and conquered by Satan's deception in the Garden of Eden (Arthur 1991:35, Brown 1987:65). Causing a separation, an unreconcilable chasm that effectively divided humanity from its Creator - the Holy God, effected this coup. Satan tempted, and succeeded in enticing Adam and Eve, who are, by imputation, representatives of all their human ancestors, to sin. Sin, being repugnant to God's holiness, and repelling to His presence, caused an immediate separation between man and his Creator. God's

absolute and innate justice inevitably demanded eternal death as the price of such an act. Fallen humanity at this stage, lost their relational privilege with God, and became fallen, spiritually blind, and wretched (Brown 1987:281, Prince 1990:40). Satan, according to a majority of the teachers in this movement, was at this point, free to usurp the God-given human mandate to rule the earth from Adam, and became by right (*South African Baptist Journal of Theology.* Winfield 2001:114) legally entitled to rule and control the entire human race. Satan at this point, became designated 'god of this world' and 'prince of this age' (Green 1995:47). Arthur writes (1991:83),

> Romans 5:12 says, 'Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned.' Sin and death began through one man, a man named Adam. When Adam had intercourse with Eve the mother of all living (Genesis 3:20), sin was inherent in his sperm. They reproduced after their own kind...From that point on, the whole world lay under the power of the evil one (1 John 5:9). Satan became the ruler of the world (John 14:30). The creation which Adam was to subdue and govern was relinquished to Satan when Adam disobeyed God.

It is from this advantage point that Satan and his demonic servants (who most protagonists of the movement would consider to be the third of the angelic beings that were cast out of Heaven along with Satan), rules and controls the world through human drudgery to this

132

very day (Christenson 1991:32, Horton 1992:277, Wimber 1985:27). Satan's rule over humanity exists by the means of blinding and deceiving people with their own native fallen bias towards fleshly desire (Green 1995:12, Liardon 1995:12), and by encouraging their inborn aversion to Divinity (Green 1995:68). Also, because Satan possesses a legal right over this fallen world, he has the power to abuse and distort nature so as to cause suffering and confusion for humankind - hence the existence in this world of sickness, deformity, and death (Liardon 1995:93). Direct demonic possession, from the direct indwelling of inanimate objects, to human bodies by evil spirits is also possible for satanic forces (Green 1995:51, Taylor 1993:15), and is often done in order to further entrench satanic dominion over the fallen human race. The motive behind Satan's resistance to God seems to be Satan's blindly proud desire to be as God (Arthur 1991:52), as an absolute despot over his place of imposed exile. Godwin writes (1994:20),

> God threw Satan out of His Heaven into the heaven beneath Him. Satan is ruling from this heaven, sandwiched between us on earth and God's Heaven...God has already judged him guilty and sentenced him to Hell. Now Satan is awaiting the execution of his judgement that Christ brought on him by His death and resurrection...Satan is still on the loose. God warns us, 'Be sober and vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour' (1 Peter 5:8). Satan still has authority over carnal man. The old man, the carnal man is no match for Satan.

Such is the theology held by many conservative evangelicals at the turn of the twenty-first century. One can recognise in the spiritual warfare movement both acquiescence to post-modern thinking in its blurring of scriptural and propositional revelation with mysticism, as well as a defensive and reactionary response to the post-modern denial of true religion. Kim Riddelbarger expresses very well the disturbing shift that recent evangelical theology has experienced due largely to post-modern influence (1992:279),

> Those who see reality exclusively through the lens of warfare between angels and demons will inevitably read the turmoils of life as proof of a struggle between those spiritual combatants. People in the culture around us are looking for answers to the great questions of life in the 'spiritual dimension'. Yet many evangelicals are preparing for the wrong kind of warfare. They are being told that they should be looking for demons to cast out if they wish to be victorious Christians and liberate society.

2.5 THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL FOUNDATION OF POST-MODERNISM

It is certainly not an easy task to come up with a working definition of Post-modernism. This is simply because the very term *post-modern* is applied to so many differing and unconnected disciplines at one time, which appear to have been thus termed in an arbitrary manner. A working definition however, may be rendered that will adequately suffice for the present dissertation's purpose. Cahoone writes (1996:2),

> At a minimum, post-modernism regards certain important principles, methods, or ideas characteristic of modern Western culture as obsolete or illegitimate. In this sense, post-modernism is the latest wave in the critique of the Enlightenment, the critique of the cultural principles characteristic of modern society that trace their legacy to the eighteenth century, a critique that has been going on since that time.

Post-modernism, generally refers to the challenge, on philosophical grounds, to *Enlightenment* presuppositions that are inherently characteristic in contemporary Western thought. It may therefore be necessary to firstly define the term*, modernism,* before proceeding to define post-modern epistemological roots. In his book, *The Death of Truth*, McCallum defines the essence of enlightenment thinking (1996:22),

> Inspired by Newton's laws of mechanics, these new modernists viewed nature as a grand machine whose processes could be understood only through the grid of natural law. People began to study nature by applying reason and increasingly standardised rules of investigation. As they searched, modern scientists discovered principles in nature that explained how the natural order worked.

Modernism, the contemporary offspring of the eighteenth century Enlightenment, is the mind-set that holds to the ability of human rationality to conceive, measure, predict, and regulate observable phenomena. Because of this confidence, observable absolutes are assumed to truly exist that stand as objects to all inquiring minds at all times. The negative reaction to this modernistic confidence is post-modernism, which is practiced by academics, primarily in order to *undermine* the above

135

modernistic confidence in immovable axioms, by means of *de-constructive* criticism (Giroux 1991:45). The fundamental objective of post-modernism is to replace objective and absolute Western thinking with a more agnostic and more culturally tolerant worldview (Lyotard 1984:31).

Where Immanuel Kant in the eighteenth century had, by his argument, established an unbridgeable barrier between phenomena and the metaphysical (Bencivenca 1987:27), post-modernism seeks to create a chasm far more profound - a barrier between the knowing subject, and all reality whatsoever that exists outside of one's own cultural and linguistic self-awareness (Lyotard 1984:47). The basic method of assault upon modernistic presuppositions therefore, focuses on the inescapable subjectivity of the human mind, and how all human awareness is essentially *interpretive* by nature (McCallum 1996:54). How this contention is effectively expressed, may be clearly grasped by introducing into the post-modern world view, one who has been considered a key pioneer in post-modern circles - one who has been widely acknowledged as a *founding father* of the movement (Cahoone 1996:177).

Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) has been acknowledged as a key figure of influence in the movement that was to come of age some seventy years after his death. In his work, A *Course in General Linguistics*, Sassure presented a radically new approach to the

study of language. Because language is so intricately bound up in human thinking in general, the effect of Saussure's work has been profound in a number of related disciplines. To grasp the fundamental point of Saussure's argument for linguistics is to grasp the basic contention of the post-modern epistemological argument (Cahoone 1996:177). Saussure suggested that language is never merely a collection of sounds that represented different objects, he writes (1966:65),

> This conception is open to criticism at several points. It assumes that ready-made ideas exist before words; it does not tell us whether a word is vocal or psychological; finally, it lets us assume that the linking of a name and a thing is a very simple operation - an assumption that is anything but true.

Here it has to be admitted that people do indeed often naively consider their very words as being merely indicators of objective and universally perceived objects. A far more complex dualism that exists between a word (*a sign*) and its object (*its significance* to the observer) is fundamental to Saussure's whole argument, and consequently, also to the basic epistemology of post-modernism. Saussure writes (1966:66),

> The linguistic sign (i.e. a word) unites not a thing and a name, but a concept and a sound image. The latter is not the material sound, a purely physical thing, but the psychological imprint of the sound, the impression that it makes on our senses.

In other words, Saussure is saying that the meaning of a word is determined, not by any natural or pre-conventional relation of word to object, but by the word's relation to other words, psychological stimulus,

and reflex (Cahoone 1996:177). The entire process of human thinking to Saussure, is an act of associating significations (*la parole*) within a particular linguistic pool of vocabulary (*la langue*) (Saussure 1966:67). When a person speaks descriptively therefore, the words of the description are to be primarily understood as a reflection of the speaker rather than the speaker's subject. This argument cannot be refuted on the grounds that every object described in human language is an object that is firstly *perceived* through the lens of human subjectivity. Saussure writes (1966:69),

> Units of grammatical facts would not be confused if linguistic signs were made up of something besides differences. But language being what it is we shall find nothing simple in it regardless of our approach; everywhere and always there is the same complex equilibrium of terms that mutually condition each other. Putting it another way *language is a form and not a substance*. This truth could not be overstressed, for all the mistakes in our terminology, all our incorrect ways of naming things that pertain to language, stem from the involuntary supposition that the linguistic phenomenon must have substance.

There can be no talk on any objective reality whatsoever that does not take firstly into account the fact that subject and object in all human thought are absolutely inseparable. Derrida, a pioneer of post-modern thought, writes in his work, *The End of the Book and the Beginning of Writing* (1974:7),

> Thus the constitutive mark of any sign in general and of any linguistic sign in particular is its two-fold character; every linguistic unit is bipartite and involves

138

> both aspects - one sensible and the other intelligible, or in other words, both *signans*, 'signifier', and *signatum*, 'signified'. These two constituents of a linguistic sign necessarily suppose and require each other.

It may be safe to say that this simple statement above is the foundation on which the general understanding of post-modern epistemology is based. Lyotard writes (1984:31), 'Thus the society of the future falls less within the province of a Newtonian anthropology than a pragmatics of language particles. There are many different language games, a heterogeneity of elements.'

Post-modernism is, therefore, based upon theoretical presuppositions that cannot simply be brushed aside. The contention of their particular epistemology that modernistic confidence in objective absolutes cannot be justified due to the human thought process has been successfully (on the philosophical level) pointed out by the post-modern movement (Kraft 1992:291). The above argument against modernistic Western thought has not, and, as far as I can see, cannot be refuted when it is taken on its own terms (Shorto 1997:5). A consistent thinker has to admit that it can never be simply ignored in philosophy, that one's own subjectivity in every mental exercise whatsoever is always inescapable. This, if understood on materialistic grounds, results in a number of serious epistemological consequences. There are innumerable possible epistemological repercussions derived from this that could be brought up for consideration

at this point. For the limited purpose of the present dissertation however, I shall mention just five of what I believe are the most influential epistemological by-products of post-modernism upon the evangelical Christian mindset.

a)   Truth is something flexible and plastic. Because no human mind can possibly encounter reality as it exists exterior to conscious subjectivity, the very idea of a human being knowing *truth as it is*, is absurd and indefensible. This means the truth needs to be considered as something that is merely constructed on a social level with the purpose of social synchronicity. This conclusion reached by post-modern epistemology impacts profoundly upon Evangelical Christianity, which is, by very nature, a proselytising faith, and presents an objective world-view.

b)   Closely related to the first point, is the consequential fact that pragmatism is the ultimate purpose for the utilisation of truth claims in a society. *Truth* is something that is *constructed* by a particular group, in order to function efficiently as social yet subjective individuals. Truth, in other words, is an inter-subjective pre-arrangement in which norms and regulations are set out as guidelines for interactive behaviour patterns. Truth, to this view, is never *stagnant* - it tends to evolve and adapt to the development of

the particular group that adheres to the truth construct. Evangelical Christianity therefore, with its objectivity and its inherent evangelistic thrust, is here challenged by post-modern epistemology at its very foundation.

c)   Because it is held to be impossible for the subjectivity-bound human mind to conceive of any reality as it exists outside of human consciousness (this would of course, include the supernatural), it is considered an absurdity to make any statement about any reality that might exist beyond inter-subjectively communicated human experience. Language that attempts to convey any knowledge which assumes an inexperienced reality, is philosophically self-refuting in its very contention. *Interpretation of experience* is considered by post-modern epistemology to be the primary valid function of religion, and for one to go beyond this, and to attribute an objective quality to one's personal religious view, is to be rejected out of hand as being something philosophically absurd. Because post-modern epistemology considers all human thought as being something that is inseparable from the human environmental and cultural conditioning (i.e. the *sign* and the *signifier* are always intertwined), every mental process has its roots not in a Platonic object (i.e. a universal rationality), but in the constitutional *make-up* of the thinker. An Afro-centric male, for

example, will think in a certain way *because he is* an African male, whereas a Eurocentric, gay female, will possess thought patterns that are peculiar to her own constitutional and psychological make-up. Even socially deviant behaviour can be attributed to the constitutional history of an individual. The impact upon Evangelical Christianity on this point is truly profound. It challenges evangelicals to reconsider their confident declarations concerning universal guilt, original sin, and human accountability to a single and objective code of ethics.

d) Religious dogmatism, in the light of the above, is absolutely rejected. Because it is believed that each culture consists of its own particular paradigm of meaning, each particular religion must be considered as being absolutely valid within its own linguistic context. Any attempt therefore, by one religious group to proselytise any other, or to claim some kind of monopoly on an objective truth, is by this mind-set, to be frowned upon and resisted. The Christian faith (especially of the evangelical variety) finds itself because of this, increasingly resisted and accused of being intolerant, insensitive, and arrogantly imperialistic.

e) The final implication that post-modern epistemology imposes upon evangelical Christianity, is that of evangelistic confidence. If what

post-modernists are claiming is to be regarded as philosophically acceptable, then it follows that all religions without any exception, are *equally true* and *valid* within their own particular cultural/linguistic context, and therefore should be regarded as being beyond challenge or criticism by members of any paradigm outside of that particular religion.

In the third and final part of this dissertation, I intend to discuss the above five points in greater detail. The focus of this dissertation will now zone into the above challenge. I intend to use the epistemology of C. S. Lewis, which was examined in the first part of this work, to engage the above epistemological contentions in a critical dialogue. I am of the firm conviction that post-modern epistemology need not be as devastating to the Evangelical message as some seem to think, and, with the help of the writings of C. S. Lewis, I intend to demonstrate this.

The above five points in particular pose an extremely serious challenge to the very validity of Christian doctrine, and especially to the legitimacy of Christian evangelism as we now know it. Post-modernism is not something that can simply be ignored by the Church; in fact, the significant impact that post-modernism is having already upon contemporary evangelicalism (as has been discussed in some measure in this chapter) clearly shows. If the Church fails to respond in an adequately reasonable manner to the above challenge, then, the present trend in evangelical Christianity towards pragmatism on the one hand, and reactionary

mysticism on the other will inevitably replace the objective confidence of Christian orthodoxy.

In 1934 Lewis wrote a poem that prophetically seemed to foresee an age when conceptions such as truth, beauty, and reality were philosophically denied (The Pilgrim's Regress 1990:235),

'Iron will eat the world's old beauty up.

Girder and grid and gantry will arise,

Iron forest of engines will arise,

Criss-cross of iron crotchet for your eyes

No green growth. Over all, the skies

Scribbled from end to end with boasts and lies.

(When Adam ate the irrevocable apple, Thou

Saw'st beyond death the resurrection of the dead.)

Clamour shall clean put out the voice of wisdom,

The printing-presses with their clapping wings,

Fouling your nourishment. Harpy wings,

Filling your minds all day with foolish things,

Will tame the eagle thought: till she sings

Parrot-like in her cage to please dark kings.

(When Israel descended into Egypt, Thou

Did'st purpose both the bondage and the coming out.)

The new age, the new art, the new ethic and thought,

And fools crying, Because it has begun

It will continue as it has begun!

The wheel runs fast, therefore the wheel will run

Faster forever. The old age is done,

We have new lights to see without the sun.

(Thou they lay flat the mountains and dry up the sea,

Wilt thou yet change, as though God were a god?'

It is my confident conviction that post-modern epistemology need present no serious challenge to Christian confidence as long as the Church remembers its own supernatural foundation.

PART THREE

POST-MODERN EPISTEMOLOGY AND C. S. LEWIS

A DIALOGUE

3.   **<u>INTRODUCTION</u>**

Post-modernism is a vast and inter-related web of assumptions and methodologies (Cahoone 1996:13). The vast web of post-modern thought cannot be tied down to one particular underlying manifesto or creed, as the movement is more of a mindset than a packaged system of philosophy (Lyotard 1984:10). The difficulty therefore, of any attempt to define, explain or debate this mind-set, is extremely daunting to any scholar. It must be remembered that post-modern thinking itself is, of its very essence, *a context adapting*, and therefore, extremely *fluid* mindset (Rorty 1991:23). This means, that in order to be positively descriptive on this subject, in any truly objective way, it is essential that the focus remains *general* in examination in order to avoid getting swamped in an ambiguity of definition that is inherent in the *shifting sands* of its contextual relativism. It is my intention in the light of this, to make it clear from the very onset of this dialogue that I have placed certain limitations and perimeters around my definitions and descriptions. It is important that the reader is aware of this fact before reading further under the possible misconception that the present dissertation has *thrown down the gauntlet* and intends to *take on* the ruling philosophical giant of the twenty-first century! The best possible way to begin this dialogue, I believe is by defining two fundamental things as a prologue.

Firstly, it is vital for the reader to recognise my own present and particular understanding of the post-modern mindset that I am addressing, in order to avoid any potential accusation that I am in actuality, contending with my own constructed and convenient *straw man*.

Secondly, the setting out of my perimeters for the discussion at hand is, I believe, essential for a sound reading of this chapter. My intended dialogue will be addressing an admittedly limited and focused area of post-modernism; i.e. its epistemological assumptions. Also, my examination is narrowed down yet further in that I will only focus my attention on where I believe that post-modern epistemology effects evangelical Christianity in a significant and direct way.

There are five epistemological assumptions that I wish to point out that are profoundly effecting academic evangelical Christian scholarship, and through this, filtering down into almost every area of contemporary evangelical life. Missiology, evangelism, Christian morality and ethics procedure, homiletics, and even systematic theology are all undergoing at present a critical re-evaluation and re-defining, due to the prevailing philosophical *zeitgeist* of our era. These five epistemological assumptions are to be the five major divisions in the following dialogue with the extracted epistemology of C. S. Lewis.

3.1   THE SUBJECTIVITY AND FLUIDITY OF TRUTH

'*The rationality - but perhaps that word should be abandoned for reasons that will appear at the end of this sentence - which governs a writing thus enlarged and radicalised, no longer issues from a logos. Further, it inaugurates the destruction, not the demolition, but the de-sedimentation, the de-construction of all the significations that have their source in that of the logos. Particularly the signification of truth.'* Jacques Derrida*, The End of the Book and the Beginning of Writing (1974:13).*

'*Moreover, the very question of truth, the right it appropriates to refute error and oppose itself to appearance, the manner in which it developed (initially made available to the wise, then withdrawn by men of piety to an unattainable world where it was given the double role of consolation and imperative, finally rejected as a useless notion, superfluous, and contradicted on all sides) - does this not form a history, the history of error of an error we call truth?'* Michel Foucault, *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History (1977:145).*

'*Simplifying to the extreme, I define post-modern as incredulity toward metanarratives. This incredulity is undoubtedly a product of progress in the sciences: but that progress in turn presupposes it. To the obsolescence of the metanarrative apparatus of legitimation corresponds, most notably, the crisis of metaphysical philosophy and of the university*

institution which in the past relied on it. The narrative function is losing its

functors, its great hero, its great dangers, its great voyages, its great goal.

It is being dispersed in clouds of narrative language elements - narrative,

but also denotative, prescriptive, descriptive, and so on.' Jean-Francois

Lyotard, *The Post-modern Condition: A Report on Knowledge (1984:xxiii).*

In his 2000 publication, *Does God Believe in Atheists?* Blanchard

describes the post-modern attitude to the concept of truth as follows

(2000:200),

> Unlike Enlightenment based modernism, which sees history as rooted in
> meaning, post-modernism rejects both. For post-modern man there is no past
> and no future, there is only a perpetual and dominant present. Neither is there
> any foundations, fixed certainties or absolutes. Post-modernism utterly rejects
> the whole idea of a rational cohesive package.

It is argued that as human consciousness is inescapably bound up in a

subjectivity of linguistic, cultural and environmental awareness, all human

conception of truth will inevitably be seen through the lenses of ones' own

personal experience. The reality of any particular individual is seen as a

monad, in which truth has been constructed from the individual's

experience, for the purpose of motivating desired and optimum behaviour.

MacIntyre writes (1984:204),

> Intentions thus need to be ordered both casually and temporally and both
> orderings will make reference to settings, references already made obliquely by
> such elementary terms as, 'gardening,' 'wife,' 'book,' and 'tenure'. Moreover, the
> correct identification of the agent's beliefs will be an essential constituent of this

task; failure at this point would mean failure in the whole enterprise. The conclusion may seem obvious; but it already entails one important consequence. There is no such thing as 'behaviour', to be identified prior to and independently of intentions, beliefs and settings.

Griffin, in his volume, *The Re-enactment of Science*, writes (1988:28),

> The idea that truth is a correspondence between statements and objective reality has been subject to a great deal of criticism. Much of this criticism is based upon confusion, inasmuch as the critics, often while verbally rejecting positivism, still presuppose the positivistic equation of the meaning of a statement with the means of its verification. The correspondence notion of truth properly refers only to the *meaning* of 'truth' which is not even identical with the question of knowledge, let alone with the question of the justification of knowledge claims.

What Griffin is saying here, is that although the notion of truth is a necessary element in human thought construction, in the final analysis, truth must be understood as *interpretation* rather than final declaration. The very constitution of the human psyche seems to argue this point in his favour. Can a mind that has been culturally conditioned in a very specific manner do anything *but* approach its concept of truth (which is itself something subjectively discovered) in an entirely subjective manner? The post-modern epistemology argues emphatically, 'no'. And it is because of this conviction that protagonists within the movement consider any objective '*truth claim'* to be *imperialistic* in nature, and something to be exposed as a domineering, manipulating play on power. Jean Francois Lyotard writes on this matter (1984:67),

151

It could (i.e. *logocentric* thinking) become the 'dream' instrument for controlling and regulating the market system, extended to include knowledge itself and governed exclusively by the performativity principle. In that case, it would inevitably involve the use of terror. But it could also aid groups discussing metaprescriptives by supplying them with the information they usually lack for making knowledgeable decisions.

Griffin in his well-read article entitled, The *Reenchantment of Science*, expresses this post-modern concern very clearly (1988:27),

Any activity properly called science and any conclusions properly called scientific, must, first be based on an overriding concern to discover truth. Other concerns will of course play a role, but the concern for truth must be overriding, or the activity and its results would be better called by another name, such as *ideology*, or *propaganda*, or *politics.*

Griffin's concept of 'truth' in his article is, however, something that is humanly constructed (1988:7). Such concern for the 'democratisation' of truth claims, and the protection of human progress from *logocentric imperialism,* has motivated the more militant post-modernist protagonists to actively resist traditional Western claims of human access to an objective reality. Much of the post-modern resistance to Western *Logocentricity* takes place in the area of academia as well as education. Giroux, a post-modern educator, writes (1991:51),

The Enlightenment notion of reason needs to be reformulated within a critical pedagogy. First, educators need to be sceptical regarding any notion of reason that purports to reveal the truth by denying its own historical construction and

152

ideological principles. Reason is not innocent and any viable notion of critical pedagogy cannot express forms of authority that emulate totalising forms of reason that appear to be beyond criticism and dialogue. This suggests that we reject claims to objectivity in favour of partial epistemologies that recognise the historical and socially constructed nature of their own knowledge claims and methodologies.

The final result of the above post-modern epistemology, is that the concept of an objective and absolute truth being accessible to the human mind is not only an incorrect conception, but is also a source of imperialistic domination of one particular group over another and therefore needs to be actively resisted for the sake of a universal human freedom of expression (Rowlands 2003:184). This is clearly realised when one observes the ideological motivation that lies behind much post-modern scholarship (i.e. Daniel Bell, *The Coming Post-Industrial Society* 1976, Sandra Harding, *From Feminist Empiricism to Feminist Standpoint Epistemologies* 1986) Behind the post-modern movement is very often, the ideological assumption that society needs to be reformed by means of the devaluation of the previously held Western conceptions of objective access to truth (Rorty 1991:21, Bordo 1987:97). But if this is the case, then it needs to be asked, what alternative system is offered in its place? The answer to this question is *a philosophical mindset of cooperation of inter-subjectivity*. Post-modern contention is that truth is not an existent *thing in itself*, but rather an instrument necessary in the assembling of human value constructs that enable people to function as self-aware and

social beings (Giroux 1991:45). Reality is therefore to be constructed by the individual independent of *logocentric* authority, according to linguistic and cultural conceptions and value. DeLashmut and Braund write (McCallum 1996:99),

> According to Post-modernism, educators are biased facilitators and co-constructors of knowledge. If all reality exists not 'out there' but only in the minds of those who perceive it, then no one can claim authority. All versions of truth are merely human creations. Educators, whether classroom teachers, researchers, or textbook authors, are not objective, legitimate authorities. Instead they view educational activities from their own constructed, biased perspective, and therefore have no privileged relationship to the truth. Ruth Zuzovsky points out the startling implications of this radical constructivist viewpoint: the knowledge constructed by learners, teachers or scientists are *all of equal worth*!

The above approach to post-modern conceptions of truth can be recognised in much of contemporary academic exercise (Cahoone 1996:20). It is at this point that I need to *narrow down* my present discussion to the confines of evangelical Christianity and the impact that post-modernism is having upon its thought and methodology. The above post-modern attitude to '*truth*' impacts profoundly upon the very foundation of evangelical Christianity, which traditionally claims to exist as a witness to, as well be as a custodian of, an objective and ultimate reality - the *kerugma*. This reality it refers to as *truth*. (Hodge 1991:20).

3.2   <u>THE   IMPACT   OF   POST-MODERN   EPISTEMOLOGY   UPON EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANITY</u>

a)   <u>A loss of the Christian Church's unique credibility in contemporary Western society</u>. With the decline of Western modernistic confidence at the turn of the twenty-first century, objective dogmatism is not only doubted, but in many circles, openly frowned upon (Blanchard 2000:232). This has resulted in a negative impact upon Christianity as a religion of dogmatic confession. Where the Church was previously regarded, even by its Western secular governments, as being the necessary moral authority of society (Brooke 1998:35), there has recently been a major shift towards an ethics of relativism and, in the major Western nations, a more open adherence to an inter-cultural and inter-faith consensus (Brooke 1998:35). The general trend in religious academic circles is today, often concerned with addressing its own devaluation in a world of inter-culturalism, where any dogmatic claims to absolute truth are frowned upon as being *logocentric*, intolerant, and imperialistic (Brooke 1998:56). The very idea of all faiths possessing equal and ontological validity is absolutely alien to the message of orthodox Christianity. Blanchard writes (2000:226),

> There are obviously social and moral issues on which the followers of different religions can usefully unite, but this can hardly validate their religion, because there are issues on which the same stance could be

taken by many atheists. To illustrate this very simply, and at a personal level, an act of kindness by an atheist is just as valuable to the beneficiary as one performed by a theist, but it is a long way from saying that all religions are essentially the same. The simple fact is that all religions *cannot* be the same. To be so, they would need to be united on the very issues on which they are most widely divided: the existence and nature of God.

With the prevailing post-modern *zeitgeist* widely influencing religious thinking, evangelical Christianity is being pressured into either reinterpreting its previously held exclusivist and proselytising stance (see following point), or in a reactionary manner, to withdraw from academia and resort to mystical and occultic justification for its existence (Horton 1993:265) (see point 1.a.iii).

b)   <u>A call to redefine evangelical definitions and methodologies.</u> Within evangelical circles it is evident that some evangelical thinkers regard themselves as being pressured into re-defining their particular world-view in order to accommodate post-modern epistemological pre-suppositions (Murray 2001:173). An example of this response to post-modern effect upon evangelical Christianity may be demonstrated from the following quotation (Codrington *South African Baptist Journal of Theology* 1999:131),

> Post-modernism is the context in which we will work to a greater extent as the years roll on. Young people who come to faith need help

recognising the current worldview for what it is - not always helpful, but definitely there. They need to be taught 'faith development skills' which takes nurture, resources, relationships and professionals. Faith development skills are about making faith work, answering questions, helping young people understand why God's word says what it says, and how to apply the obvious and work out the implied. It means taking serious the experiential and the cognitive - not merely answering, 'it is the Bible, and so its true' - but rather, 'it is the Bible because its true and best and it works.

Codrington is saying here that in our present post-modern era, Christian leaders need to adapt by means of re-structuring their traditional dogmatic and declarative evangelistic methodology and replacing it with an evangelism that appeals to the existential and the pragmatic. Such a restructuring is now widely practiced, and can be witnessed in various different areas of contemporary evangelical life. An example of the above paradigm shift may be seen in recent evangelical movements such as the *Church Growth Movement* and the Gospel of *Positive Affirmation* (see Richard Mayhue *Taking the Church to Doctor's Surgery, Sword and Trowel* 2000:9).

c)   <u>A replacing of systematic theology with mystical experience and the occult.</u> In the past two decades of the previous century, an influential school of thought has gained accreditation within evangelical circles. This school has commonly been referred to as

the Spiritual Warfare Movement. This movement proposes a world-view that at first glance appears in its terminology to be comfortably 'in line' with evangelical thinking. The protagonists of this movement all claim to be conservative in their theology and that they are merely emphasising in their message a previously neglected biblical truth. The Spiritual warfare Movement is increasingly being accepted and welcomed into many evangelical churches as a timely guide and teacher in the evangelical main-stream. The influence and growth of the movement in the Western world is quite phenomenal - especially considering the fact that it has not been in circulation for more than twenty years or so. The present popularity of spiritual warfare seminars which discuss '*satanic strongholds'* and strategies for deliverance - increasing calls to prayer groups for the purpose of the strategic '*mapping'* of '*spiritual strongholds*' the abundance of such material now packing Christian bookshops - books, tapes, videos, - the trend towards organised interdenominational '*prayer marches'* and mass gatherings, intended to *break down demonic power* over cities and nations. The distinguishing mark of the above movement is its severance from the traditional approach to hermeneutics and systematic theology. There is an underlying source that is impacting the evangelical world in no superficial way. It is not a difficult task to discover one of the major motivations behind this

movement. Kim Riddelbarger writes (Horton 1992:269), 'Another factor that demonstrates the depth of the uneasy relationship between evangelicals and the surrounding culture is the massive growth of the Christian subculture.' To many evangelicals, the challenge of post-modern epistemology has deprived them of a confident *kerugmatik* objectivity and justification for their very existence (McCallum 1996:199). The response of many evangelicals to post-modern epistemology has been an abandonment of a previously confidently adhered-to systematic theology, and a paradigm shift towards an emphasis into the mystical. It requires little imagination to recognise the *cause - effect* relationship between a subjective and arbitrary post-modern epistemology and a subjective and arbitrary approach to Christianity. Riddelbarger writes (Horton 1992:278),

> The huge popularity of Frank Peretti's *This Present Darkness* and its sequel, *Piercing the Darkness,* reveals a sense of uneasiness and fear of the world in what I consider a disturbing trend...Because the intended audience is sometimes ill-informed about the purpose of the genre of fiction and the reasons for telling a compelling story simply to entertain, many who read Peretti's fictional account of spiritual warfare possess little ability to discern between truth and fiction. People have in many cases, actually redefined their entire worldview based upon a novel, instead of developing a view of the supernatural from the clear *non-fictional* teaching of scripture.

3.3   **IS TRUTH SUBJECTIVE AND FLUID?**

It is interesting to note that although C. S. Lewis died about two decades before the birth of the post-modern movement, he fully anticipated its eventual arrival. In his 1947 book *Miracles*, he writes (1990:110),

> Men became scientific because they expected Law in Nature, and they expected Law in Nature because they believed in a Legislator. In most modern scientists this belief has died: it will be interesting to see how long their confidence in uniformity survives it. Two significant developments have already appeared - the hypothesis of a lawless sub-nature and the surrender of the claim that science is true. We may be living nearer than we suppose to the end of the scientific age.

It is evident that Lewis knew full well what the foundational premise would be of the eventual successor to modernism - the denial of objectivity. The entire post-modern ethos may be verbally encapsulated in these words. The post-modern argument, on philosophical grounds, seems irrefutable. It cannot be denied that all systematic human thinking begins and ends as subjective experience. It is also an undeniable fact that any human conception of reality believed to be outside of subjective experience must inevitably be conceptualised through the *lenses* of that particular subjective experience (Appignanesi and Garratt 2003:79). Further, in the light of the previous two sentences, it must be admitted that any claim to a human accessibility to a reality that is absolute in nature (i.e. *truth*) is an epistemological absurdity (Bordo 1987:97). *Truth claims*, to post-modern thinking, are to be resisted in the post-modern society as imperialistic

160

power-plays (Giroux 1991:51), which are able to be used by the oppressor to rule over and dominate the oppressed (Appignanesi and Garratt 2003:78, Lyotard 1984:67). From what has been written above, we may infer two main contentions in the post-modern position on truth; firstly, truth, as it exists outside of human conscious subjectivity, is absolutely inaccessible. Any human conception of truth must be recognised as being at best, merely *interpretive* in nature. Secondly, that any absolute *truth claim,* is ultimately motivated by political, economic, or social dominance, and this, for moral reasons, should be resisted (Appignanessi and Garratt 2003:87).

This however poses a profound challenge to the Christian faith, more especially to evangelicalism, which exists on the claim to be a custodian of ultimate and revealed truth. The dilemma that post-modernism presents to evangelicalism is this; either it must deny and resist post-modern epistemological claims (and to do this would amount to retreating from reasonable argument) by appealing to a mystical irrationality, or it must make its doctrinal content more compatible to post-modern epistemology (see previous paragraph). It would appear at face value, that there can be no possible *third option* out of the dilemma, I believe however, that there is. The epistemology of C. S. Lewis (discussed in chapters two to four in the first part of this dissertation), supplies a rational and philosophically sound answer to the post-modern epistemological dilemma on truth.

Lewis' argument for truth's objective accessibility is a positive one. It is grounded in the *derivative* and *dependant* nature of human experience to the *cosmos* that is exterior to it. Human thought, Lewis argued, always presupposes (albeit often unconsciously), a prior frame of reference that underlines its very exercise. For example, time, three-dimensional space, matter, in its various forms, energy, in its various modes, all *pre-exist* and *pre-determine* the individual human mind's functioning process. As a mould pre-determines the figure moulded, so the human mind is inseparably related to the cosmos that has formed and regulated it. Consequentially, human consciousness corresponds in an intimate and related manner with the universe that it experiences. This cannot be denied. Even a deluded madman thinks in terms of *'me'* and '*you'* - '*when*' and *'how'* - all of these words being derived from the three-dimensional, cosmic source. Just as linguistic communication is not possible without a prior and under-lying vocabulary, grammar, and syntax, so thought is not possible without the underlying rationality (intelligent or accidental) of the human life support - the *cosmos*. Lewis writes (*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 really alien to the nature of the universe. Or putting it the other way round, the nature of the universe cannot be really alien to reason. We find that matter always obeys the same laws, which our logic obeys. When logic says a thing must be so, Nature always agrees. No one can suppose that this can be due to some happy coincidence.

In an article entitled, "Religion without Dogma" (*Timeless at Heart* 1991:95), Lewis writes,

> The validity of rational thought, accepted in an utterly non- naturalistic, transcendental (if you will), supernatural sense, is the necessary presupposition of all other theorising. There is simply no sense in beginning with a view of the universe and trying to fit the claims of thought on at a later stage. By thinking at all we have claimed that our thoughts are more than mere natural events. All other propositions must be fitted in as best they can round that primary claim.

In an article entitled, "Bulverism" (*First and Second Things* 1985:18), Lewis writes,

> Everything that I know is an inference from sensation (except the present moment). All our knowledge of the universe beyond our immediate experiences depends on inferences from these experiences. If our inferences do not give a genuine insight into reality then we can know nothing. A theory cannot be accepted if it does not allow our thinking to be a genuine insight, nor if the fact of our knowledge is not explicable in terms of that theory.

To deny that human thinking is derived from, and dependant upon its very mould and life-support is to argue extreme *solipsism,* and there are few post-modernists that would, I think go that far. But if it is to be conceded that there must be an intimate *inter-weaving* dualism of some kind that is existing between the objective *cosmos* and subjective human consciousness, then, Lewis would argue, this constitutes a solution to the question of human access to objective reason. The subjective, conscious consideration of its own relationship with that which structures and

163

sustains it, constitutes a human experience of objective truth. Lewis explains (*God in the Dock* 1990:35),

> 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. New bottles for new wine by all means: but not new palates, throats, and stomachs, or it would not be for us 'wine' at all. I take it we should all agree to find this sort of unchanging element in the simple rules of mathematics.

The human experience of thought, in other words, is related to the cosmos, to use an analogy, as a *reflection* is related to its *substance*. As a mirror's reflection may be unclear and distorted in its reflecting, it remains a derivative of, and comparable with, the form that is casting the reflection. This very position, is used by the German theologian Emil Brunner in his systematic theology in order to illustrate the significance of the theological term, *Imago Dei* (Brunner 1966:55). Lewis argues that this co-relationship between the thinker and the thinker's life-supporting frame of reference, is an essential clue to the validity of at least *some measure* of objectivity in human thinking. He writes (*Christian Reflections* 1990:89), 'Where thought is strictly rational, it must be in some odd sense, not ours, but cosmic or super cosmic.' And it is at this stage that I am personally convinced (and I believe Lewis would point it out), that post-modern epistemology betrays a significant flaw in its argument. Post-modern epistemology fails to recognise, it appears to me, the ontological *duality* of human rational

experience. Both *substance* and its *reflection* are confounded together as one in their contention. The *reflection* in other words, denies any significant and measurable conscious awareness of its *substance*. Post-modern epistemology begins and ends exclusively, it seems, with the subjectivity of the thinker, and from this starting-point (quite rightly), denies any possible cognitive access to anything that may be exterior to that. Lewis would challenge the contention at this point as being unreasonably reductionist in nature, and incomplete as a philosophical theory. The Lewisian challenge may not be taken seriously by those who would insist upon a totally solipsist epistemology, but this being the case, a philosophical consistency is called for. Lewis '*bolts the escape routes'* for those who would deny any objectivity in thinking and yet insist upon '*proving their point'* in a rational manner. He writes to those who would suggest that they are able to construct rational arguments, which contend for the irrationality of human minds (*Christian Reflections* 1991:102),

> Let us strip it of the illegitimate power it derives from the word 'stagnation' with its suggestion of puddles and mantled pools. If water stands too long it stinks. To infer thence that whatever stands long must be unwholesome, is to be a victim of metaphor. Space does not stink because it preserved its three dimensions from the beginning. The square on the hypotenuse has not gone mouldy by continuing to equal the sum of the squares of the other two sides...except on the supposition of a changeless standard, progress is impossible...We can go on getting a sum more and more nearly right only if the one perfectly right answer is 'stagnant'.

It is at this stage of Lewis' argument for the validity of objectivity in thinking that a crucial and often seemingly unconsidered point is raised. Is it *really* possible for a person who denies on epistemological grounds, any validity in any objective truth claims, to actually make such a claim in the first place? Lewis writes (*Miracles* 1990:26),

> You may if you like, give up all claims to truth. You may say simply, 'our way of thinking is useful - without adding, even under your breath, and therefore true.' It enables us to set a bone and build a bridge and make a Sputnik. And that is good enough. The old high pretensions of reason must be given up. It is a behaviour evolved entirely as an aid to practice. That is why when we use it simply for practice, we get along pretty well; but when we fly off into speculation and try to get general views of 'reality' we end in endless, useless, and probably merely verbal disputes of the philosopher...Goodbye to all that. No more theology, no more ontology, no more metaphysics...But then equally no more Naturalism. For of course, Naturalism is a prime specimen of that towering speculation discovered from practice and going far beyond experience which is now being condemned.

Lewis points out here, the absurdity in the reasoning of a person who claims not to believe in objective reason. It would seem that the debunkers of the validity of objective reason are totally dependent themselves upon an objective rationality in order to argue their own point! Lewis writes (1990:84),

> There is therefore no question about a total scepticism about human thought. We are always prevented from accepting total scepticism because it can be formulated only by making a tacit exception of the thought we are thinking at the

166

moment - just as the man warns the newcomer 'Don't trust anyone in this office' always expects you to trust him at that moment. Whatever happens then, the most we can do is to decide that certain types of human thought are 'merely' human or subjective, and others not. However small the class, some class of thoughts must be regarded not as mere facts about the way human brains work, but as true insights, as the reflection of reality in human consciousness.

It is here that post-modern epistemology still needs to, within a defensible paradigm, explain its motivation and justify its epistemological claims. It would seem that an epistemology that denies any access to rational objectivity has denied itself, by its very own contention, the right to make any objectively rational claims at all, and yet, surprisingly, this is what is being done.

a)	**The Post-modern Epistemological Argument Syllogistically Summarised**

PREMISE ONE: Human self-consciousness consists entirely of cultural/linguistic programming.

PREMISE TWO: Human self-consciousness has no access to any reality outside of cultural/linguistic programming.

CONCLUSION: There can be absolutely no human access to any objective truth, and therefore all *metanarrative* truth claims are invalid.

167

b)   **The Epistemological Answer of C. S. Lewis Syllogistically Summarised**

PREMISE ONE: All propositional claims, according to post-modern epistemology, are ultimately subjective, and therefore, invalid as objective statements.

PREMISE TWO: The above applies also to the claim of the first premise.

CONCLUSION: The post-modern epistemological claim above refutes its own first premise, and is therefore rendered invalid.

Post-modernist Lawrence Cahoone simply dismisses the above objection without answering it. He writes (1996:21),

> The charge of self-contradiction is an important one; nevertheless, it is a purely negative argument that does nothing but blunt the criticisms post-modernism makes of traditional enquiry. The sometimes obscure rhetorical strategies of post-modernism make sense if one accepts its critique of such enquiry. To say then that the post-modern critique is invalid because the kind of theory it produces does not meet the standards of traditional or normal enquiry is a rather weak counter-attack.

What Cahoone is saying here, is that the philosophical validity of post-modern epistemology is of a lesser importance (and therefore not necessary to validate) than the practical value that its premises and methodologies have in effectively criticising modernistic pre-

168

suppositions. It is my own conviction that the above statement represents post-modern reluctance to consistently theorise and its appeal to philosophical orthopraxy above philosophical orthodoxy. The reason why Cahoone claims that the above argument is, '*a rather weak counter attack*', is because he is assuming that post-modernism is under no compulsion to meet any preconditioned accreditation standards of '*traditional*' and '*normal enquiry',* but is this really so? In the following point, the epistemology of C. S. Lewis will put this assumption to the test.

3.4   IS TRUTH SOMETHING HUMANLY CONSTRUCTED?

'The essential political problem for the intellectual is not to criticise the ideological contents supposedly linked to science, or to ensure that his own scientific practice is accompanied by a correct ideology, but that of ascertaining the possibility of constituting a new politics of truth. The problem is not changing people's consciousness - or what's in their heads - but the political, economic, institutional regime of the production of truth.'
Michel Foucault, *Truth and Power (1972:133).*

'Every society has always existed on the basis of knowledge, but only now has there been a change whereby the codification of theoretical knowledge and materials science becomes the basis of innovations in

technology. One sees this primarily in the new science-based industries - computers, optics, polymers - that mark the last third of the century.' Daniel Bel, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society (1976:xvi).*

'Language games would then be games for perfect information at any given moment. But they would also be non-zero-sum game, and by virtue of that fact discussion would never risk fixating in a position of minimax equilibrium because it had exhausted its stakes. For the stakes would be knowledge (or information, if you will), and the reserve of knowledge - languages reserve of possible utterances - is inexhaustible. This sketches the outline of a politics that would respect both the desire for justice and the desire for the unknown.' Jean-Francois Lyotard*, The Post-modern Condition: A report on Knowledge (1984:67).*

Consequential to post-modern scepticism regarding human access to any absolute truth, is the conviction that all experienced reality needs to be constructed and filtered into a particular coherent and systematised world-view in order for not only psychological stability, but also social stability to be ensured. It is accepted that as the human being is not regulated instinctively, the imposition of an extra-sentient regulator of behaviour is necessary. On the other hand, because human experience has no access to any extra-sentient absolute, it is linguistic and cultural programming that imposes a reality and value system (McCallum 1996:97). Truth, in other

words, is for an individual, something that has been constructed linguistically and culturally (Rorty 1991:23). In the light of this fact, many post-modern facilitators and educators consider it their particular task in the post-modern world, to impose such values upon their subjects that would ensure optimum psychological and social effect. Negative anti-social values such as prejudice, intolerance, competition, and criminality, need to be *conditioned out* of an individual living in an increasingly multi-cultural and transforming society. Post-modern educational theorist Henry A. Giroux writes (1991:49),

> Critical pedagogy needs a language that allows for competing solidarities and political vocabularies that do not reduce the issues of power, justice, struggle, and inequality to a single script, a master narrative that suppresses the contingent, historical, and the everyday as a serious object of study. This suggests that curriculum knowledge not be treated as a sacred text but developed as part of an ongoing engagement with a variety of narratives and traditions that can be re-read and re-formulated in politically different terms. At issue here is constructing a discourse of textual authority that is power sensitive and developed as part of a wider analysis of the struggle over culture fought out at the level of curricula knowledge, pedagogy, and the exercise of institutional power.

The post-modern educational ideal is to impose a value-system upon its students that ensures optimum psychological and social behaviour in the new multi- cultural global *village* (Appignanesi and Garratt 2003:78)*.* The glaring failures of Western civilisation to ensure justice, equality and world

peace motivate such sentiment. The ideological basis underlying post-modern thinking is therefore justified by its protagonists by reference to the inequalities that are abundantly inherent in the social systems of industrialised Western world with its modernistic ideological re-enforcement. David Hall writes (1991:58),

> Any serious claim to objective truth involves us in insisting that reality shine through our assertions. The very being of things is present in one's theory or ideology. Our age is altogether too suspicious of such claims. The pluralism of doctrines and theories within a single culture such as ours, as well as the pluralism of cultures, makes any claim to the truth of things an implicitly political act. Dogmatism, totalitarianism, and narrow intolerance are all directly connected with unjustified claims to final truth.

We see here the way in which the post-modern sociologist connects injustice and imperialism with the supposedly incorrect belief in human access to absolute truth. John McGowan, in his work entitled, *Post-modernism and its Critics* (1991:19) writes,

> Western reason's fundamental attachment to the law of non-contradiction can thus be seen as based on the instrumental utility of that principle in the attempt to assert control. The repression of contradiction both within the self and within the social body favours integrity and unanimity over difference and multiplicity.

Post-modern social theory therefore seeks to dismantle modernistic absolutes in order to establish a world of eventual contentment, tolerance and inter-cultural cooperation. In order to achieve this goal, Western

arrogance and domination (usually regarded as the white, male, plutocrat), needs to be devalued and put on a par with other, equally valid world-views (Lyotard 1991:64). Educational theorist Gary DeLashmut describes the intention and process (McCallum 1996:11),

> Better self-esteem, post-modernists argue, can only come when schools empower those who traditionally had very little power, that is, minorities and women. Efforts to advance empowerment of students is seen as a movement called 'critical pedagogy'. The goal of critical pedagogy is to empower those who have been pushed to the margins of society, who therefore have had little say in what ideas and practices count as legitimate and worthwhile. Critical educators work not to remove politics and ideology from education, but rather to make power relations more equal between the diverse groups in society. their goal is to equalise the relationships in the education community so that the oppressed people have the freedom and the power to overcome oppression and pursue lifestyles of their choosing.

It is doubtful if anybody in his or her sound mind would consider such ideological intention as being something ignoble or irrelevant. The post-modern dream is one of *equalisation* and *freedom of choice* (Cahoone 1996:20). To many contemporary thinkers, the post-modern mindset is the key that will open up for humanity a *brave new world* of harmony. Pioneer post-modern sociologist Daniel Bell writes (1976:xxii),

> A post-industrial transformation provides no 'answers'. It only establishes new promises and new powers, new constraints and new questions - with the difference that these are now on a scale that has never been imagined previously in world history.

It is certainly not the present writer's intention to trivialise or even to disagree with post-modern ideological sentiment. However, because post-modern epistemology emphatically denies any possible human access to reality exterior to subjective experience, a fundamental philosophical discrepancy flaws their ideal. It is at this point that it is again necessary to bring in the epistemology of C. S. Lewis in order to critically dialogue post-modern ideology. It may be remembered (see part one of this dissertation) that not only Lewis, but the titan philosopher Immanuel Kant had argued for the possibility of some human access to *extra-conscious* reality, due to what has been termed the *Categorical Imperative* - that is, an intuitive human awareness of a universal and categorical *right* and *wrong* (Bubner 1997:41). Lewis writes, (*Christian Reflections* 1991:78), 'Kant was perfectly right at that point at least: the imperative is categorical. Unless the ethical is assumed from the onset, no argument will bring you to it.' If there is, as both Kant and Lewis contend, an overarching ethical imperative, that is, some norm of value that is universally and categorically recognised, then it is perfectly legitimate for one to desire the imposition of a universal justice, tolerance and equality. To desire an end to oppression and prejudice, and to devise ways and means of ensuring a better world for all, however, can only be universally legitimate, as long as a categorical imperative is firstly recognised. One cannot expect and demand the rules of chess to be applied to skittles! And it is here that post-modern ideology, based upon a total subjectivity, finds itself

unjustified. Lewis, in his 1943 lectures later published as a book entitled, *The Abolition of Man*, terms the *categorical imperative*, the *Tao* (see part one, chapter two). In this book, he anticipates the arrival of a post-scientific mindset (some thirty years before it came about). C. S. Lewis scholar, Walter Hooper considers this particular work to be the finest piece of Christian apologetics ever written (1977:65) Lewis writes in prophetic anticipation of post-modern epistemology (1977:32),

> You say we shall have no values at all if we step outside the Tao. Very well: we shall probably find that we can get on quite comfortably without them. Let us regard all ideas of what we *ought* to do simply as an interesting psychological survival: let us step right out of all that and start doing what we like. Let us decide for ourselves what man is to be and make him into that: not on any ground of imagined value, but we want him to be such. Having mastered our environment, let us now master ourselves and choose our own destiny.

The thesis of Lewis' above book, is that nothing ethical or moral in human behaviour may be expected or demanded, unless it is firstly universally agreed that a related categorical imperative exists. Ethics is *a paradigm*, *a language game, a system,* that has to be submitted to before any claim of *right* or *wrong* can be considered universally legitimate. In the light of this, Lewis has vital relevance to the present debate on post-modernism and epistemology. He writes (*Christian Reflections* 1991:78),

> I deny that we have any power to make a new ethical system. I assert that whatever and whenever ethical discussion begins, we have already before us an ethical code whose validity has to be assumed before we can even criticise it.

> For no ethical attack on any of the precepts can be made except on the ground of some other traditional precept. You can attack the concept of justice because it interferes with the feeding of the masses, but you have taken the feeding of the masses from the world-wide code. You may exalt patriotism at the expense of mercy; but it was the old code that told you to love your country. You may vivisect your grandfather in order to deliver your grandchildren from cancer: but take away the traditional morality, and why should you bother about your grandchildren?

Lewis here asks a crucial question - on what ground can a person, who has been denied the access to any objectivity, expect or demand a desired and universal optimum objective? To be more definitive and in context with our present discussion, what legitimate *right* do post-modern theologians, educators and sociologists have to restructure epistemological values in order to establish a more 'just' and 'free' society? What are the *grounds* for this post-modern ideology? Lewis writes (1977:21),

> The important point is not the precise nature of their end, but the fact that they have an end at all...and this end must have real value in their eyes. To abstain from calling it 'good' and to use instead, such predicates as, 'necessary' or 'progressive' or 'efficient' would be a subterfuge. They could be forced to answer the question, 'necessary for what?', progressing towards what?', 'effecting what?'; in the last resort they would have to admit that some state of affairs was in their opinion good for its own sake. And this time they could not maintain that 'good' simply described their own emotion about it.

176

The post-modern response to this challenge, seems to be that ethical and even rational imperatives need not be, as traditionally claimed, something *extra-human,* but may just as well be justified along pragmatic grounds, made valid by consensus (McCallum 1996:41). In other words, the prevailing mindset of a particular culture decides what *right* and *wrong* means, on purely pragmatic grounds. Pioneer post-modernist, Alistar Macintyre writes (1984:204),

> In what does the unity of an individual life consist? The answer is that its unity is the unity of a narrative embodied in a single life (i.e. existential authenticity). To ask, 'what is good for me?' is to ask how best I might live out that unity and bring it to completion. To ask, 'what is good for man?' is to ask what all answers to the former question must have in common. But now it is important to emphasise that it is the systematic asking of these two questions and the attempt to answer them in deed as well as in word which provide the moral life with its unity.

In other words, where it may be asked, 'by what standard does post-modernism decide a *right* or a *wrong* proposition or action?' Macintyre (somebody who is widely acknowledged to be representative of post-modern epistemology) would answer, 'Right and wrong are measured by the maximum *good* or *bad* effecting existential authenticity on a social level.' Charles Jencks explains that post-modern values are justified as long as they (1986:20), '...will support relative absolutism, or fundamental holism, which insists on the developing and jumping nature of scientific growth, and the fact that all propositions of truth are time-and-context sensitive.' What this means, is that post-modern values are considered as

being *valid,* as long as they fall agreeably within, and can be justified by the paradigm of social post-modern epistemology. It is therefore, an *inter-subjective* consensus that justifies and vindicates, to post-modernity, what is *right* and *wrong, true* and *false.*

But this answer to our challenge is insufficient to satisfy a critical and consistent enquirer. If it is merely inter-subjective pragmatic consensus that decides what is, and what is not, *real* and *false*, *good* and *bad*, then a crucial question may be asked. Lewis writes (*The Abolition of Man* 1977:38), 'The conditioners then, are to chose what kind of artificial *Tao* they will, for their own good reasons, produce in the human race. They are the motivators, the creators of motives. But how are they going to be motivated themselves?' He writes in an address entitled, *On Ethics* (*Christian Reflections* 1991:72),

> Let us suppose for the purpose of argument, that there really is an 'instinct' (in whatever sense) to preserve civilisation, or the human race. Our instincts are obviously in conflict. the satisfaction of one demands the denial of another. And obviously, the instinct, if there is one, to preserve humanity is the one of all others whose satisfaction is likely to entail the greatest frustration of my remaining instincts. My hunger and thirst, my sexual desires, my family affections, are all going to be interfered with. And remember, we are still supposed to be in the vacuum, outside all ethical systems. On what conceivable ground, in an ethical void, on the assumption that the preservation of the species is not a moral but merely an instinctive end, can I be asked to gratify my instinct

> for the preservation of the species by adopting a moral code? Why should this
>
> instinct be preferred to all my others? It is certainly not my strongest.

If human consciousness is entirely subjective in its epistemological nature,
and is ethically motivated either by instinctive or arbitrary social selection,
then in the final analysis, the words *ethically right* or *wrong,* cannot have
any single *real* meaning in them at all. Ultimately to this mindset, all
human action must finally be arbitrary in nature. Lewis writes in an article
entitled, *The Poison of Subjectivism* (*Christian Reflections* 1991:108),

> If 'good' means only the local ideology, how can those who invent the local
>
> ideology be guided by any idea of good themselves? The very idea of freedom
>
> presupposes some objective moral law which overarches rulers and ruled alike.
>
> Subjectivism about values is eternally incompatible with democracy. We and our
>
> rulers are of one kind only so long as we are subject to one law. But if there is no
>
> law of Nature the *ethos* of any society is the creation of its rulers, educators, and
>
> conditioners; and every creator stands above and outside his own creation.

The post-modern epistemological claim that each individual cultural
consensus is sufficient to justify the words, *right* and *wrong*, does not ring
true upon critical examination. Dennis McCallum provides a helpful case-
study that will help argue this point (1996:270),

> This scenario raises more complicated contradictions for the post-modern
>
> thinker. Female circumcision is a manifestation of misogyny and control of
>
> women. The procedure guarantees women will never experience orgasm, and
>
> therefore, will take no pleasure in sex. In the words of one African apologist, the
>
> practice 'frees women from their bondage to lust to find their true identity as

179

mothers'. The girls have little or no say in whether they receive the procedure. Viewed objectively, this practice is a savage and brutal violation of women, as feminists have rightly pointed out.

But there's a problem. Female circumcision is also a time honoured rite of passage in another culture - in an oppressed, non-Western, non-white culture at that. It is therefore off limits to post-modern judgement of any kind. In culturally post-modern groups, we often find those who agree with their tour guide. They feel we cannot judge this situation because we have no context from which to view it other than our own cultural reality. Someone might suggest that we can't force our view on them, but this is a different point. The question is not how to change their culture - by force or by persuasion - but *whether we should even tr*y. Some post-modern-influenced thinkers are confused by this dilemma, while the more militant post-modernists are clear: we cannot judge their social reality. Condoning clitorectomies naturally makes the women in the group nervous.

We have to agree that for us to judge events in another culture isn't possible apart from the existence of a moral absolute that applies to all cultures, whether it is acknowledged or not. When we put such a point on it, the post-modernists' position either hardens or begins to soften.

Finally, we are ready to consider one more example: What about Hitler's Germany? They had a rich cultural heritage of anti-Semitism, including killing Jews, that went back for centuries. Were we wrong to judge Nazi culture and intervene militarily to stop what we considered oppression?

Post-modern scholarship to my knowledge has not as yet addressed this question. It becomes apparent to a perhaps morbid and paranoid thinker, that here, with post-modern epistemology, we have the opportunity for a perfect *Big Brother* scenario. A scenario where arbitrary values and

imperatives are imposed upon a plastic and uncritical society. Such potential mind-control would make the propaganda machine of Nazi Germany or Maoist Communist China seems relatively democratic. Lewis writes (the Abolition of Man 1977:48),

> To reduce the *Tao* to a mere natural product is a step of that kind. Up to that point, the kind of explanation which explains things away may give us something, though at a heavy cost. But you cannot go on 'explaining away' forever: you will find that you have explained explanation itself away. You cannot go on 'seeing through' things forever. The whole point of seeing through something is to see something through it. It is good that the window should be transparent, because the street or garden beyond it is opaque. How if you saw through the garden too? It is no use trying to see through first principles. If you see through everything, then everything is transparent. But a wholly transparent world is an invisible world. To 'see through' all things is the same as not to see.

To 'see through' something here, refers to the debunking and denying of extra-human imperatives that have been traditionally believed to stand over/against human consciousness as an objectivity. The 'first principles' that he mentions above are the categorical imperatives that have been held to by civilisation since its inception. Lewis raises two potent arguments against the post-modern understanding of truth as construct. Firstly, He points out the fact that the values and ideology of post-modernism have been, as it were, 'borrowed' from the traditional value system. To ask the question, why justice and equality are the objectives of

post-modern ideology can only be answered in an arbitrary way if the post-modernist is to remain consistent to the sceptical epistemology.

Secondly, there is an implicit danger in considering reality as construct. It logically and inescapably follows from the post-modern epistemological value system, that the Nazi persecution and attempted extermination of Judaism was justifiable, as long as such action was understood as being a paradigmatic cultural consensus. If we are to consistently follow post-modern epistemology, then there can be nothing to prevent, in a future era, the birth of a culturally consented paradigm that frowns upon what we now know as justice, and welcomes cruelty and vice in its place. There can never be such a thing as a unique and universally categorical *post-modern ethics*. It needs to be noted therefore, that the post-modern values that are supposedly derived from its own epistemology turn out to be the very same values of traditional ethics.

3.4.1 <u>SUMMARY OF THE DIALOGUE THUS FAR</u>

Post-modern epistemology teaches that because human consciousness is absolutely bound within its own cultural and linguistic subjectivity, the very idea of any human access to an absolute truth is to be rejected as an absurdity. Post-modernism holds that in the light of this, any objective truth claim made, should be regarded with suspicion, and resisted as *logocentric* imperialism.

It is upon this assumption, that it is hoped the new multi-cultural *global village* will find its motivation for living in a society of tolerance and equal rights. The problem with this assumption however, is that in order to discredit all forms of *modernistic* objective thinking, post-modernism has cancelled out its very own epistemological validity! If no proposition whatsoever can ever be objectively validated or even considered, then on what grounds, can post-modernism claim its own epistemological contention? There can only be one of two possible options taken here. Either an absolute and arbitrary *solipsism* is to be opted for, or some justification needs to be supplied. Many post-modernist protagonists opt for the latter, and would agree that the above objection indeed points out a logical self-contradiction, yet they reject the claim that this effectively refutes their position's validity. How they answer the charge of logical self-refutation is as follows; The charge of self-refutation, they say, is grounded upon *logocentric* and rationalistic assumptions, and because post-modern epistemology stands *outside* of that particular paradigm, it need not be subject to its rules and restrictive limitations.

The burden of proof therefore, lies with the post-modern epistemological claim. Can it indeed make such an exception in regard to its own philosophical contentions? Is post-modern

183

epistemology exempt from logical and rational criticism? In order to justify this claim for exemption, it has to establish the fact that there indeed does exists a *zone of exemption,* an alternative conception of reality to the one held by traditionally rationality.

It would appear from the examination of post-modern ideological motivations (i.e. justice, equality, freedom of choice), that their ethical and moral assumptions are fundamentally the same as those held in traditional morality. There is no alternative ethical behavioural code that can be discovered in post-modernism. The mindset initiates in its system, *nothing whatsoever* that is novel, and has been derived from something *outside* of traditionally recognised morality. Consistent and honest observation will reveal that post-modern values are derived from, and dependant on, the very same overarching morality that previous philosophical systems have simply taken for granted. Once this has been admitted however, then the post-modern claim to be exempt from the traditional restrictions of logic and rationality is proven void. The above argument is an encapsulation of the refutation of a mindset that was not yet even in existence (but only in its seminal form) when developed by C S Lewis!

3.5   IS OBJECTIVE MEANING RENDERED INACCESSIBLE BY LANGUAGE?

'Thinking is on the descent to the poverty of its provisional essence. Thinking gathers language into simple saying. In this way, language is the language of Being, as clouds are clouds of the sky. With its saying, thinking lays inconspicuous furrows into language. They are still more inconspicuous than the furrows that the farmer, slow of step, draws through the field.' Martin Heidegger*, Letter on Humanism (1977:242).*

'All language, at its fundamental level, may be nothing more than an undulating sea of suggestiveness.' David Hall*, Modern China and the Post-modern West (1991:66).*

'I see now that these nonsensical expressions were not nonsensical because I had not yet found the correct expressions, but that their nonsensicality was their very essence. For all I wanted to do with them was just to go beyond the world and that is to say beyond significant language. My whole tendency and I believe the tendency of all men who ever tried to write or talk Ethics or Religion was to run against the boundaries of language. This running against the walls of our cage is perfectly, absolutely hopeless.' Ludwig Wittgenstein*, (1965:12).*

Post-modern theory holds that all human thinking is the direct result of social programming by means of the symbolism and language within a particular culture. All mental activity, in the final analysis, is due to language (Lyotard 1984:100). As human beings, we both think our thoughts and communicate them in the words and grammatical system of a particular system of symbols, or language (Derrida 1974:14). Benjamin Whorf, a pioneer of post-modern thinking, in his work, *Language, Thought, and Reality*, (1956:43), expresses the position in this way,

> The forms of a person's thought, are controlled by inexorable laws of pattern of which he is unconscious. These patterns are the unperceived intricate systematisations of his own language...Every language is a vast pattern system, different from others, in which are culturally ordained forms and categories by which the personality not only communicates, but also analyses nature, notices or neglects types of relationship or phenomena, channels his reasoning, and builds the house of his consciousness.

Post-modern theory is primarily based upon this understanding. Linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857 - 1913), had paved the way for such an epistemology when, in his major work, *Course in General Linguistics*, he had demonstrated how the *significance* that is humanly ascribed to any *symbol*, will always be inescapably bound together with the subjectivity that ascribes the significance (Saussure 1966:68). One cannot, in other words, consider a word like, for example, *love*, without also taking into consideration the *person* that is using the word, as well as the *context* in which the word is being utilised, as well as *to whom* the word is being

addressed. *Signification* therefore, always precedes the word itself. There can be little significant objection to the above contention, especially having first admitted the absolute sentient subjectivity through which human consciousness always functions. Language, therefore, is regarded as the '*scaffolding*' that supports all human thought. Without language, human thought is not possible. It is at this point that post-modern epistemology directly poses as a serious challenge to evangelical Christian thinking, a system that is based entirely upon a supposed universally categorical, and relevant book, written in ancient Hebrew and Greek. Language, to the post-modernist, is something that has been *subjectively absorbed,* from within a particular cultural *pool* of language - one inherits one's thought patterns and value systems, in the final analysis, from the particular language system one was brought up in - and from one's own language paradigm, one can never escape. Scholar Jim Leffel considers this post-modern epistemology *a linguistic prison-house*, where the human mind is ultimately locked into its own cultural subjectivity. He suggests that human thought is twice imprisoned, once, in the prison of *semantics*, and then secondly, in the prison of *syntax* (McCallum 1996:38). He writes regarding the 'prison of semantics',

> We confuse perceptions with reality. If we say, for example, 'the room is hot,' we unconsciously substitute perception for reality, subjectivity for objectivity. We should say, 'the room '*appears*' to be hot,' or 'I *perceive* it to be hot.' Instead, by stating perceptions as though they were reality our words actually insulate us from reality. We confuse the symbol - words - with reality. We think we

understand something because we have formed a word for it. As cultures accept definitions of words, they solidify the confusion between the symbolic and the real.

Culturally imposed thinking, because it is imposed linguistically, inevitably closes an individual into the '*air-tight vacuum'* of semantics. One's own conception of reality is inherited by one's culture, and submitted to the very moment that a person is taught the particular meanings of certain words in a language's vocabulary. Also, the wider and more complex a particular language's vocabulary might be, the more complex the mind will be able to think and conceptualise. One is therefore, in a very real sense, imprisoned within the semantics of one's own language. Secondly, Leffel suggests that the human mind is also imprisoned within the syntax of a language. He writes (McCallum 1996:39),

> If semantics, the meaning of words, subverts our impressions of reality, then syntax does the same for our reasoning about reality. Syntax is the structure of a language, the rules for using language. Post-modernists claim that syntax, by governing the way we relate words to each other, establishes logic within language. Yet they go on to argue that the logic of language effectively overthrows the laws of objective reason itself...We categorise perceptions and thoughts based on the language we use. And since the logic (syntax) of one language cannot be applied to the logic (syntax) of another, we are confronted with separate, culturally isolated systems of thinking. This difference between systems goes beyond the fact that cultures say different things. They actually think in different ways because their languages arrange and interpret ideas differently, according to post-modernists.

To post-modern epistemological theory, the very way in which a person comes to an inferred conclusion depends primarily upon the particular syntactical pattern in the thinker's own linguistic system. Derrida (1974:15), explains it like this, 'Every linguistic unit (i.e. word in a language) is bipartite and involves both aspects - one sensible, and the other intelligible...These two constituents of a linguistic sign necessarily require and suppose each other.' Language in other words is about the mental application of significance to symbols that represent reality (Lyotard 1984:47). This helps the post-modern anthropologist explain the reason why certain language groups of the world are more warlike than others, or why the Western language groups are more inclined to materialist rationality than the indigenous peoples of the world (Pierce 1996:24). Syntax, according to post-modern epistemology, *channels the reasoning flow* of an individuals thought. Where semantics provides a thinker's structure, syntax direct a thinker's flow of reasoning (McCallum 1996:38). The result of an epistemology that is based upon semantics and syntax, obviously not only encapsulates each individual within his/her own cultural monad of consciousness, but also renders any mind-set that is objectively evangelistic, redundant. 'On what grounds,' post-modernism argues, 'may one particular language group impose its own linguistic system upon another?' And it is here that Christianity faces a huge challenge.

3.5.1 **The practical effect of post-modernism's devaluation of objective language upon evangelical Christianity**

A major shift in recent evangelical thinking, has been an increasing call from many evangelical academics, pastors, and teachers, to make twenty-first century Christianity more pragmatically *relevant* to the secular world that it seeks to evangelise. Orthopraxy is being preferred in many evangelical circles over orthodoxy (Murray 2001:214). Perhaps one or two references from conservative evangelical thinkers within my own denomination on the above topic will illustrate adequately what I am saying here. In the *South African Baptist Journal of Theology* (1999:41), E. Tian Foshaugen wrote an article that addressed the very post-modern epistemological challenge to evangelism that is being discussed here. Foshaugen writes, 'In a post-modern world of no absolutes, where interest in 'spirituality' is growing, the Church needs to ensure it practices a relevant and contemporary spirituality to fulfill its commission as reflected in Mt. 28:18-20.'

The call to meet the challenge of post-modernism by being relevant is commendable. Foshaugen then proceeds by defining his framework, 'This study proceeds from the assumption that in worship, the spirituality of a person/Church is both formed and revealed. Worship, as a way of life, is dependant on the way in

which spirituality is defined and practiced.' Notice in this passage, that '*worship*', is described as being dependant on something both '*defined'* and '*practiced*' This can only mean that the *perceived significance* of '*worship',* and the lived-out expression of this perceived significance, is ontologically what worship ultimately amounts to. This definition of worship stands in perfect agreement with post-modern epistemology, as being something that has been assigned significance by conscious but concurred subjectivity. Foshaugen continues (1999:41), 'Worship, spirituality, and the Christian faith become synonyms for each other.' Here we find a subtle but definitive shift in emphasis. Whereas historical orthodoxy insisted that the Christian faith consists of a confessional adherence to the objective *deposit* of a verbal revelation that is encapsulated in creeds and confessions (Heppe 1978:16), Foshaugen contends that Christian faith is merely '*synonymous'* with the subjective experience of worship. He then goes on to call the Christian Church to a more practical and existential approach to evangelism. He writes (1999:50), 'There is a need for the development of a holistic spirituality - a spirituality that integrates the Christian experiences of God, in relation to themselves and the post-modern world they live in.' It cannot be denied that here is an example of how post-modern epistemology has fundamentally

influenced, and virtually re-defined the understanding of Christian faith.

In the same edition of *The South African Baptist Journal of Theology*, 1999 edition, Swartz and Codrington write an article on the necessity of reforming evangelistic methodologies for the youth programmes, in conformity to the post-modern mindset. Dogmatic and objective declarations of right and wrong need to be replaced with a more inter-subjective approach (1999:132). The post-modern epistemology is in no superficial way profoundly effecting the previously confident objectivity of evangelical evangelism, as the two above examples show. Dennis McCallum writes,

> Evangelicals today are being tempted to make the same mistake liberals and neo-orthodox leaders made earlier with modernism. they are tempted to jettison or at least minimise the importance of propositional truth - statements of fact that can be confirmed or denied by reason and evidence. In a day when propositional, objective truth is considered 'fundamentalist,' 'intolerant,' 'exclusive,' Christians are enticed to view it as a nuisance, especially if they crave popularity from the rest of our culture.

The result of post-modern epistemology upon evangelical thinking has been one that is undeniably reducing confidence in an objective and universally categorical *kerugma*, and ensuring an

192

evangelical *retreat* into more pragmatic fields of relevance (Horton 1992:56).

3.5.2 <u>Post-modern Semantics and Syntax, and C. S. Lewis</u>

Post-modernism is able to make its epistemological claim, simply because it is absolutely reductionist in its pre-suppositions. A representative view of this can be seen in Henry A. Giroux's paper, *Towards a Post-modern Pedagogy* (1991:52). Here, he writes, 'Knowledge has to be constantly re-examined in terms of its limits, and rejected as a body of information that only has to be passed down to students.' To the post-modernist*, truth* is a mere social and existential *construct. Reality,* is merely a matter of interpretation. All human knowledge, they would claim, can be explained by the discipline of linguistics. It is with confidence that I believe that C. S. Lewis would passionately resist such claims. Lewis was certainly not naive in this matter. He was fully aware of the contextual fluidity of language. In a paper entitled, *Modern Translations of the Bible,* he writes (*First and Second Things* 1985:87), 'There is no such thing as translating a book into another language once and for all, for language is a changing thing. If your son is to have clothes it is no good buying him a suit once and for all: he will grow out of it and have to be re-clothed.' There was no doubt in Lewis' mind that language is a '*living and fluid thing'.* Because Lewis was a

193

thorough-going supernaturalist, however, he would most definitely reject post-modern epistemological reductionism. Lewis saw human self-consciousness as being something that has been derived from a *pre-moulding, pre-human source*, and as something dependant upon this source for its very existence (*Miracles* 1990:119). The self-consciousness of a human being related to this pre-existing source, by analogy, as a wax imprint corresponds to its seal. Lewis would indeed argue that there has to be acknowledged some kind of a *cause* and *effect* inter-relationship existing between human consciousness and its pre-existing life-support system. This inter-relationship, it would appear, is totally ignored in post-modern epistemology. Post-modernist epistemology begins with the existential experience of humanity - a *monad* of sensation and language (McCallum 1996:12). It can not but be admitted that human thinking is closed within a linguistic prison of semantics and syntax, if such a claim is first based upon the above assumption. Is however, such an assumption really justified? Lewis would refute the post-modern reductionist epistemology on two grounds.

i)   Firstly, Lewis would refute post-modern reductionism on the grounds of the physical and psychological structure of a human being. Simple observation would admit that the human body consists of inter-relating organs that fulfill very

specific and unique purposes. An eye, for example, exists specifically for the purpose of vision, an ear for the purpose of hearing sound. It cannot be denied that the human anatomy is made up of organs that specifically exist and work for very definite purposes. If on the level of physical organs, there is no serious objection to the concept of '*intended purpose',* then what objection may there be to considering the validity of the human mind itself as something in the same way that is 'i*ntended*' as a *means* to communicate and inter-act with its pre-existing mould, the *Logos?* If each *part* of a human body contains suggestions of *purpose* and *intention*, then why deny the validity of the mind, which is, in the end, merely a synthesis of all of the bodily parts working together in harmony, and culminating in the self-consciousness that we call the *ego* (Witsius 1992:77)*.* Lewis believed that the very structure of a human being made him/her a '*receiver'* and a '*transmitter*' of pre-existing *cosmos* (Pilgrim's Regress 1990:211). In his article entitled*, Behind the Scenes* (*Christian Reunion 1990*), Lewis compares human consciousness with his childhood experience of the theatre. His particular joy in going to the theatre, was to try and catch a glimpse of the goings on behind the scenes. His fascination with this, was the fact that

behind the presentation experienced on the stage before the audience, was *another world* of unseen props of cardboard and whitewash, as well as the hidden, but purposeful activity of the stage-hands and cue callers. Lewis enjoyed the thought that all the unseen activity and structure that existed at the same time as the performance behind the scenes, was in reality, all for one single harmonised purpose and goal - to present the play for the entertainment of the audience. All the unseen structure and activity existed especially for the play to be enjoyed by the audience. He writes (1990:99),

> Is not our pleasure (even I take some) in Depth Psychology one instance of this pleasure in the contrast between 'behind the scenes' and 'onstage'? I begin to wonder whether that theatrical antithesis moves us because it is a ready-made symbol of something universal. All sorts of things are, in fact, doing just what the actor does when he comes through the wings. Photons of waves (whatever it is) come towards us from the sun through space. They are in a scientific sense, 'light'. But as they enter the air they become 'light' in a different sense: what ordinary people call *sunlight* or *day,* the bubble of blue or grey or greenish, luminosity in which we walk about and see. Day is thus a kind of stage set. Other waves (this time, of air) reach my eardrum and travel up a nerve and tickle my brain: all this is behind the scenes; as soundless as the whitewashed passages are undramatic. Then somehow (I've never seen it explained), they

> step on to the stage (no one can tell me where this stage is), and become, say, a friend's voice or the *Ninth Symphony.*

The human consciousness to Lewis, is the *grand culmination,* the synthesised purpose - *the event on the stage.* Human consciousness therefore, is to Lewis, an intended *receiver* and *reflector* of pre-cognative reality - and it is from this assumption that he draws his conclusions regarding a universal objectivity in human thinking.

ii)   Post-modernism recognises no epistemological distinction whatsoever between human consciousness and the environment in which the individual has been born, is sustained and daily functions. Pioneering post-modern physicist P. C. W. Davies writes (Griffin 1988:6),

> The notion that time flows in a one-way fashion is a property of our consciousness. It is a subjective phenomenon and is a property that simply cannot be demonstrated in the natural world. This is an incontrovertible lesson from modern science...A flowing time belongs to our mind, not to nature.

There is to this mindset, only one observable reality, and that is human experience (Habermas 1987:294). The environmental context is only recognised in so far as it is something basically contextual to this human experience.

Both the object *perceived*, as well as the *signification ascribed to it,* are *locked up* in the same single experience of human consciousness (Derrida 1974:15). Anything outside of human experience may be considered to be '*real*', but nonetheless, '*inconceivable*' - and therefore irrelevant to practical philosophy. Because of Lewis' epistemological dualism however, he was able to intelligently consider reality *outside* of direct human experience as well as conscious experience *per se.* This obviously explains why he refused to accept the *noumenal barrier* to metaphysical knowledge that had been set up by Kant. Lewis draws a clear line of distinction between an object and the signification that is humanly ascribed to it and makes no apology for doing so. In his 1947 work entitled, Miracles, he clearly draws this line (1990:77), 'Thought is distinct from the imagination which accompanies it. Also thought may be in the main, sound - even when the false images that accompany it are mistaken by the thinker for true ones.' This is a very important point. Whereas post-modern epistemology binds the *signifier*, the *signified*, and the *signification* together and regards them as inseparably bound together within the same single conscious experience, Lewis makes an epistemological distinction between *thought* and *imagination.* He proves that such a

198

distinction exists by apt demonstration. In a paper entitled,
"Is Theology Poetry?" (*Screwtape Proposes a Toast*
1977:52), Lewis writes,

> The first person of the Trinity is not the Father of the Second in a
> physical sense. The Second Person did not come 'down' to earth
> in the same sense as a parachutist: nor re-ascend into the sky
> like a balloon: nor did he literally sit at the right hand of the
> Father. Why then, does Christianity talk as if all these things did
> happen? The agnostic thinks that it does so because those who
> founded it were quite naively ignorant and believed all these
> statements literally; and we later Christians have gone on using
> the same language through timidity and conservatism.

Here we note that words are used to express the Christian
faith that seem at very least, crudely anthropomorphic. Did
Jesus '*come down*' to earth? Is He now, '*ascended'*, and at
the *'right hand'* of His '*Father'*? Lewis continues (1977:52),

> What did the early Christians believe? Did they believe that God
> really had a material place in the sky and that He received His
> Son in a decorated state chair placed a little to the right of His
> own - or did they not? The answer is that the alternative we are
> offering them was probably never present to their minds at all. As
> soon as it was present, we know which side of the fence they
> came down. As soon as the issue of Anthropomorphism was
> explicitly before the Church in, I think, the second century,
> Anthropomorphism was condemned. The Church knew the
> answer (that God had no body and therefore couldn't sit in a

199

> chair) as soon as it knew the question. But till the question was
> raised, of course, people believed neither the one nor the other.

In an article entitled, "Horrid Red Things" (*First and Second Things* 1985:37), he writes,

> In the same way, and early peasant Christian might have thought that Christ's sitting at the right hand of the Father, really implied two chairs of state, in a certain spatial relation, inside a sky palace. But if the same man afterwards received a philosophical education and discovered that God has no body, parts, or passions, and therefore neither a right hand nor a palace, he would not have felt that the essentials of his belief had been altered. What had mattered to him, even in the days of his simplicity, had not been supposed details about celestial furniture. It had been the assurance that the once crucified Master was now the supreme Agent of the unimaginable Power on whom the whole universe depends. And he would recognise that in this, he had never been deceived.

What Lewis is pointing out here may be expressed in post-modern terminology. The *significance* that early Christians *signifiers* ascribed to the *kerugma* that was being *signified*, was not something inseparably interwoven, as post-modernists would claim. To prove his point Lewis provides us with this prime example. I shall coin this, *semantic compensation.* The words, '*descended, ascended, Father,*

Son, Throne, were utilised as *symbolic aids* in the construction of a *scaffolding of conception,* which enabled the early Christians to comprehend the incomprehensible supernatural reality that lay behind the words, by means of transposition (see chapter four, part one of this dissertation). The moment one considers the idea of semantic compensation however; one is forced to acknowledge the possibility of (not one but) two essential strands running within a human's thinking. One being the *conception* of a reality that is perceived and acknowledged - the latter strand being the compensating significance that is ascribed to it, which serves as an aid to a better comprehension of the former. Lewis writes (*Screwtape Proposes a Toast* 1977:53),

> My mental picture of an Oxford college, before I saw one, was very different from the reality in physical details. But this did not mean that when I came to Oxford I found my general conception of what a college means to have been a delusion. The physical pictures had inevitably accompanied my thinking, but they had never been what I was chiefly interested in, and much of my thinking had been correct in spite of them. What you think is one thing, what you imagine while you are thinking is another.
>
> The earliest Christians were not so much like a man who mistakes the shell for the kernel as like a man who is carrying a nut that hasn't yet cracked. The moment it is cracked, he knows which part to throw away. Till then he holds on to the nut: not because he is a fool, but because he isn't.

This Lewisian distinction in thought between, *thought* (proper) and *imagination,* is an effective challenge to post-modern epistemological reductionism. Using his metaphor of a nut and its shell, we can construct an illustration that may grant substance to this premise. We can imagine for this purpose, the following.

An Amazonian tribal shaman may describe what Western doctors would refer to an epileptic fit, as being a demonic oppression. He may consider its causation as being due to an evil curse that has been inflicted upon the victim due to some broken taboo. This, Lewis would term the *imaginative - the shell* of semantics. Behind the shaman's terminology however, would be the understanding that his own particular conception of his patient's condition, as well as the condition's causation is open to constant re-assessment and re-definition. If the shaman for example, later discovered that his patient had recently been hit over the head, then he would change his diagnosis to incorporate this new discovery. If, to take the proposition one step further, the shaman discovered modern medicine, and made a decision to accept its proposals, his very terminology would change. What would *not change*, however, would be his knowledge

of the objective fact that he had a troubled patient, and that the patient's condition was due to some causation. Here we should realise the point that Lewis is making concerning semantics and thought. The condition of the shaman's patient and its causation (*the thought proper - the nut*) will remain constant and objective, while the shaman's interpretation thereof (*the imaginative - the shell*), will adapt and change as knowledge thereof increases.

Lewis' own example of the early Christians is a very good illustration of this point. The first century Italian peasant, as *signifier*, may well have assigned a very crude and naive anthropomorphic *signification* to his/her theological conceptions, *the signified*, but these conceptions would constantly adapt and re-adjust to newly acquired data. This adapting of semantics to newly acquired information strongly suggests that the mind intuitively recognises an objectivity that exists *outside of* immediate experience (i.e. *the nut*), and compensates for its incomplete knowledge by means of imaginative imagery (i.e. *the shell*).

Lewis' distinction between thought (proper) and imagination is helpful in explaining the adaptability of human

conceptions. A major problem that challenges post-modern epistemology on this point, is this: why, if human consciousness is confined to the closed system of its own linguistic pool, should any semantic adaptation to circumstances and environment occur at all? Is language really something inescapable, or does consciousness recognise (even a fraction of) some objectivity? Lewis writes (*Miracles* 1990:106); 'Experience therefore cannot prove uniformity (or its changes), because uniformity has to be assumed before experience proves anything.' Another Lewisian attack on the above epistemological scepticism of semantics is as follows: in an article entitled, "The Language of Religion", Lewis writes (*Christian Reflections* 1991:177),

> There seem to be people about to whom imagination means only the presence of mental images (not to mention those like professor Ryle who deny even that), to whom thought means only unuttered speech, and to whom emotions are final, as distinct from the things they are about. If this is so, and if they increase, then all real communications between them and the earlier type of man will finally be impossible.
>
> Something like this may be happening. You remember Wells' *Country of the Blind.* Now its inhabitants, being men, must have descended from ancestors who could see. During centuries, a gradual atrophy of sight must have spread through the whole race; but at no given moment till it was complete, would it (probably) have been equally advanced in all individuals. During

this intermediate period a very interesting linguistic situation would have arisen. They would have inherited from their un-blind ancestors all the visual vocabulary - the names of the colours, words like, 'see' and 'look' and 'dark' and 'light'. There would be some who still used them in the same sense as ourselves: archaic types who saw the green grass and perceived the light coming at dawn. There would be others who had faint vestiges of sight, and who used these words with increasing vagueness, to describe sensations so evanescent as to be incapable of clear discrimination. (The moment at which they begin to think of them as sensations in their own eyeballs, not as externals, would mark an important step). And there would be a third class who had achieved full blindness, to whom *see* was merely a synonym for *understand,* and *dark* for *difficult.* And these would be the vanguard, and the future would be with them, and a very little cross-examination of the archaic type that still saw would convince them that its attempt to give some other meaning to the old visual words was merely a tissue of vague, emotive uses and category mistakes.

Not only does Lewisian thought resist the post-modern epistemological imposed limitation of *semantics,* but also it denies their '*prison of syntax'.* Leffel writes (McCallum 1996:39), 'Since the logic of one language (syntax) cannot be applied to the logic (syntax) of another, we are confronted with separate, culturally isolated systems of thinking.' Lewis developed a novel approach as to understanding how

anything metaphysical could be accommodated to human conception. He termed this approach, *Transposition*. Lewis describes this as the following (*Screwtape Proposes a Toast* 1977:84), 'Transposition occurs whenever the higher reproduces itself in the lower.' (For a full explanation of transposition, see chapter three of part two in this dissertation). Lewis' argument, using his concept of transposition, would go something like this - Post-modern epistemology denies the possibility of a linguistic paradigm having any objective conscious contact with anything outside of its own paradigm. Each linguistic paradigm is an air-tight *monad* from which there is no escape (McCallum 1996:38). This contention can be clearly refuted by a person who holds that a *bona fide* reality exists somehow outside of existential human consciousness, as well as an understanding of transposition. The following example may illuminate this point.

A transposition may be applied to a printed musical score that was originally intended to be played by a string quartet. By means of transposition, the score may be used to be played on the piano. This will mean that the musical notes printed originally for four string instruments, will now be read

instead as notes for the piano and played as such. This transposition will entail the compensation of piano keys and chords in the place of violin and cello harmonies etc. The question may be asked, 'is there a relationship between the original score for a string quartet and the transposition for the piano?' The answer must obviously be, 'yes.' But the *signs* and the *significations* read on the score (the syntax), are interpreted radically different for say, a cello player than a pianist. The cellist sees the score in terms of finger positions on his fret-board, whereas the pianist sees the score in terms of ebony and ivory keys. The answer is that, as long as the existence of the original intended use of the score is unknown, the transposition, as well as the obvious relationship existing between cellist and pianist, will be inconceivable. The illustration can be taken further. The same score originally written for a string quartet may be played not only on the piano, but also on the Welsh harp, the Indian sitar, the Australian *dijeri-du*. In the light of this illustration, post-modern epistemology can only justify its reductionist position on the *monad* of syntax because it will not recognise any reality *outside* of, or *beyond* subjective consciousness. With the epistemological acceptance of there being even a *possible* observable reality existing

beyond human experience, transposition is able to account for how linguistic paradigms are able to comprehend and communicate with each other and beyond, without any epistemological absurdity at all.

3.5.3 The Post-modern Epistemological Argument Syllogistically Summarised

PREMISE ONE: Semantics is the structure of meaning for all human self-consciousness.

PREMISE TWO: Syntax regulates and directs the character and pattern of all human thinking.

CONCLUSION: Human self-consciousness is imprisoned behind *'the iron curtain'* of semantics and syntax.

3.5.4 The Epistemological Answer of C. S. Lewis Syllogistically Summarised

PREMISE ONE: The human mind is capable of adjusting its semantics to conform with any new information imposed upon it.

PREMISE TWO: If any communicating reality outside of human self-consciousness did (even hypothetically) exist, it could be humanly comprehended by means of transposition.

CONCLUSION: Semantics and syntax do not necessarily enclose human self-consciousness in an inescapable *monad*

3.6   IS RELIGIOUS DOGMATISM SOMETHING INTER-CULTURALLY TABOO?

'The technocrats declare that they cannot trust what society designates as its needs; they 'know' that society cannot know its own needs since they are not variables independent of the new technologies. Such is the arrogance of the decision makers - and their blindness.' Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Post-Modern Condition: A Report on Knowledge (1984:65).*

'The other aspect of narrative selfhood is correlative: I am not only accountable, I am one who can always ask others for an account, who can put others to the question. I am part of their story as they are part of mine. The narrative of any one life is part of an interlocking set of narratives.' Alasdair Macintyre*, The Conception of a Tradition (1984:204).*

'For the pragmatist, by contrast, 'knowledge' is, like 'truth', simply a compliment paid to the beliefs which we think so well justified that, for the moment, further justification is not needed. An enquiry into the nature of knowledge can, on his view, only be a socio-historical account of how

various people have tried to reach agreement on what to believe.' Richard

Rorty, *Solidarity or Objectivity? (1991:26).*

Dennis McCallum describes in his work entitled, *The Death of Truth*, the

scope of the following section (1996:201),

> Post-modernists argue that those they label fundamentalists are unacceptable
> because they subscribe to universal truth claims, what post-modern thinkers call
> *metanarratives.* Metanarratives are over-arching explanations of reality based on
> central organising 'truths'. Those who believe in universal explanations for reality
> are considered to be *totalistic* or *logocentric* in their thinking. Instead post-
> modernists believe each group tells its own story or narrative, their own
> understanding of reality - understandings that others should never discount,
> exclude or marginalise. *Totalistic* thinkers such as *fundamentalists* want their
> story to dominate all other stories.

The above statement needs to be understood in the light of the previous

paragraphs in this section of the dissertation. If there is no human

consciousness outside of linguistically systematised sentience, then

religion is indeed something very difficult to define, let alone teach! Post-

modern theologian Mark Taylor suggests, that due to the fluid and word-

bound contextuality of the human mind, even the word*, God,* can be

misleading. Taylor suggests a substitutive title for Divinity - *Thoth* - The

Egyptian god of writing. As post-modern epistemology considers all

human thought as analogous to a textual construction, where every word,

space and punctuation on the page is context-dependant, and

meaningless outside of its context, the name *Thoth* as a substitute for the term, *God*, seems appropriate to Taylor. He writes (1984:116),

> It is, of course, it is impossible to master *Thoth* by the logic of exclusion. In the liminal time-space of scripture, hard and fast oppositions are shattered and every stable either-or is perpetually dislocated. The divine milieu is neither fully present nor absent but is present only to the extent that it is at the same time absent. It neither is nor is not; it is insofar as it is not and is not insofar as it is. It is not totally positive nor completely negative but affirms in negating and negates in affirming...For this reason, the divine milieu is not thinkable within the terms of classical logic, but only within the graphics of *pharmakon*.

What Taylor means by *pharmakon* (a word derived from classical Greek, meaning drug, or medicine), he goes on in the same passage to describe as follows (1984:16), 'The *pharmakon* is the movement, the locus and the play the production of difference.' I take Taylor's statement on the ambiguity of religious thought as being representative of the epistemology at present under discussion. Because human thought to post-modern epistemology is always enclosed within an inescapable play on words, and can only reason as semantically instructed and channeled by the syntax, religion is, and can only ever be, something absolutely subjective in nature. It is because of this, that post-modernism stands in strong opposition to any form of religious fundamentalism. Hall writes (1991:59), 'Dogmatism, totalitarianism, and narrow intolerance are all directly connected with unjustified claims to final truth'. If each religious paradigm is culturally constructed, and each culture is equal to other cultures, then

no one religious construct should impose its own value system upon any other. Also, if each linguistic paradigm is an inescapable *monad*, then any attempt by one religion to win converts from other religious world-views, is not only considered imperialistic, but also impossible. McCallum writes (1996:203), 'Let's be clear. Post-modernists aren't against religion. They are only against religious teaching that holds to objective truth and the usefulness of reason. Religion based only on personal experience and 'what's true for me' is perfectly compatible with the post-modern worldview.'

The impact of the above position is now evident in many religious circles today. Inter-faith dialogue has recently become a fashionable topic in seminaries and minister fraternals. Arthur Song gives an apt description of this, and the dilemma that it poses to evangelical Christians (*The South African Baptist Journal of Theology* 2000:191),

> As Christians we need to recognise that we are living in a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and therefore a multi-religious society. This is the reality. We can show tolerance and patience to those whose faiths differ from ours and thereby earn the privilege to address their deepest need for a personal saviour in Jesus Christ. Or we can display a superior religious attitude and 'thrust the gospel down the throats' of those to whom we wish to minister, not because we are unconcerned about their eternal welfare, but simply because we are insensitive to their own religious piety and sincerity.

The inter-faith dilemma is even more perplexing than Song suggests. 'How many Christian evangelists,' post-modern thinkers ask, 'truly realise the arrogance as well as the absurdity implicit in their efforts to win a convert from another religion?' It is held by this mind-set that a person inherits their religious values in the same way that they inherited their language - from their own particular culture (Giroux 1991:45). Post-modern antagonism towards any universal and objective categorical imperative, it would seem, has one single exception - namely their own particular position on this matter (McCallum 1996:201). A prime example of this may be illustrated in the ideological motivation behind post-modern educational theorist Henry Giroux. He writes (1991:49), 'Ethics must be seen as a central concern of critical pedagogy (i.e. post-modern education).' The immediate question that comes to mind is, '*whose* ethics? Or, ethics derived from *which* cultural paradigm? Post-modernist sociologist David Hall writes that we need to (1991:59), '...desire to see essential unity among cultures...' but on what does he base such a desire? On what grounds should it be agreed that his sentiment is considered as right? It is at this point that the thinking of C. S. Lewis may help in solving the dilemma.

3.6.1 C. S. Lewis and Religious Dogma

I believe that Lewis would tackle the above problem by firstly establishing his pre-supposed supernaturalist position. Lewis held

that evidence for supernatural reality could be rationally discerned in four major ways: in rationality itself, in the Categorical Imperative, in the universal lure of *sehnsucht*, and in the universality of religious awe (see part one of this dissertation). From his supernaturalist epistemological foundation, Lewis would argue that human self-consciousness tends to reflect the over-arching supernatural realm in a certain peculiar way - by means of *mythology* (Walker 1998:132)*.* This term needs to be understood in a very specific way. Myth, to Lewis was not merely primitive explanation of natural phenomena, nor was it merely fabled history. Myth to Lewis is a *shadow*, a *reflection of universal reality* that falls on human consciousness in varying levels of fidelity. This is expressed in propositional and three-dimensional forms, usually in the form of narrative (Walker 1998:132). Traces of Lewis' four universals (see part one of this dissertation) are all to be found in varying degrees in every true myth (Walker 1998:140). Lewis explains the significance of myth as an aid to human comprehension of the metaphysical realm. He writes (God in the Dock 1990:42), 'In the enjoyment of a great myth, we come nearest to experiencing as a concrete what can otherwise only be understood as an abstraction.' In a paper entitled, "Religion Without Dogma?" (*Timeless at Heart* 1991:87), he writes,

> I believe that in the huge mass of mythology which has come down to us
> a good many different sources are mixed - true history, allegory, ritual,

the human delight in story telling, etc. But among these sources, I include the supernatural, both diabolical and divine. We need here only concern ourselves with the latter. If my religion is erroneous then occurences of similar motifs in pagan stories are, of course, instances of the same, or a similar, error. But if my religion is true, then these stories may well be a *preparatio evangelica,* divine hinting in poetic and ritual form at the same central truth which later focused and (so to speak) historicised in the incarnation.

It is this very understanding of myth that justifies for Lewis, his confidence in Christianity as the one true religion. In the same paper he continues (1991:88),

I could not believe in Christianity if I were forced to say that there were a thousand religions in the world in which 999 were pure nonsense and the thousandth fortunately true. My conversion, very largely, depended on recognising Christianity as the completion, the actualisation, the entelechy, of something that had never been wholly absent from the mind of man.

If we understand Lewis' use of the word myth - i.e. the vehicle instrumental in conveying universal reality to human consciousness by means of a transposition into narrative, then a possible solution to the above dilemma of religious dogmatism is presented to us. In an article entitled, "Christian Reunion" (*Christian Reunion and other Essays* 1990:20), Lewis writes,

It is important at this point that I should not be misunderstood. What I am trying to say might be interpreted to mean that doctrines 'don't matter', and that the essence of the spiritual life lay either in the affections or in some 'mystical' experience to which the intelligence is simply irrelevant. I do not believe it is so. That the spiritual life transcends both intelligence and morality, we are probably all agreed. But I suppose it transcends them as poetry transcends grammar, and does not merely exclude them as algebra excludes grammar. I should distrust a mysticism to which they ever became simply irrelevant...To the very last, when two people differ in doctrine, logic proclaims that though both might be in error, it is impossible for both to be right. And error always to some extent disables.

The illustration of transposition that I have previously used in this section, may help to demonstrate the significance that Lewis' concept of myth can have in the above debate. In order for a score written for a string quartet to be played on the piano, a transposition is required. The notation printed on the page will be accommodated to the piano keys. Rather than four string instruments, only one piano is used. Chords will compensate for the harmonising of different string instruments. The musician who knows the original score as being intended for a string quartet will immediately be able to recognise the transposition that has taken place when it is heard on the piano. Here is the point - the transposition may effect the *quality* of the music. It is, once transposed, now a *solo* piece where it was originally a *quartet,* it now has a different, *tone* and *pitch* - the

transposition has in other words, made the score sound *qualitatively* different. This does not mean however, that the score itself is *essentially* different at all. The very same melodies and harmonies are played in both the original string quartet as well as the transposed piano solo - only now the piano is compensating for the lack of the four wind instruments. A Beethoven lover would immediately recognise that it is his *12th string quartet* that is being played, even if it were played on a piano. This is always the case in transposition. If it were *not* the case, if even a slightly *essential* difference were noted, for example a different melody or harmony was played, then it could not be considered that a transposition had taken place at all, the different melody and harmony would be considered a completely different score. In transposition, the *higher*, *more complex,* that is filtered down to the *lower, less complex*, will always, due to compensating accommodation, imply a *qualitative* difference between the higher and the lower, but never an *essential* difference. The lower will always correspond in degree, with the higher.

Perhaps another analogy will strengthen this point that I am making. In order to explain the visual wonder of a sunset to a person born blind, a transposition would be absolutely necessary. Visual imagery would have to be somehow expressed by appealing

to the blind person's remaining four senses. Touch, smell, sound and taste, would have to *compensate* for the blind person's inability to actually see the splendid sunset. One would have to say things like, 'the sunset *feels* like...' or '*sounds* like...' Thus far I am sure, transposition in this particular case is understood. If however, my description of a sunset by using the compensatory aid of touch, sound, taste, and smell, led the blind person to not perceive of a sunset at all, but rather my descriptions led him/her to perceive a chicken-run, then transposition could never have truly occurred. Transposition will always reflect back accurately to, and correspond with, its higher reality - otherwise it is not transposition at all.

Lewis considered, with transposition in mind, myth to be the *lower form* expression of ultimate reality. Ultimate reality in other words, is transposed into myth. In the light of this, it may now be better understood why Lewis considered some myths to be closer to the truth than others, and why he considered Christianity to be the ultimate myth of all (*Timeless at Heart* 1991:87). In a paper written in 1963 to explain his own objection towards the ordination of women priests, Lewis effectively connects myth as transposition and religious dogma. He writes (*God in the Dock* 1990:90),

> To us a priest is primarily a representative, a double representative, who represents us to God and God to us. Our very eyes teach us this in church. Sometimes the priest turns his back on us and faces the east - he speaks to God for us: sometimes he faces us and speaks to us for

God. We have no objection to a woman doing the first: the whole difficulty is about the second. But why? Why should a woman in this sense represent God?...The sense in which she cannot represent God will perhaps be plainer if we look at it the other way round. Suppose the reformer stops saying that a good woman may be like God and begins saying that God is like a good woman? Suppose he says that we might just as well pray to 'Our Mother which art in Heaven' as to 'Our Father'. Suppose he suggests that the Incarnation might just as well have taken a female as a male form, and the Second Person of the Trinity be as well called the Daughter as the Son. Suppose finally that the mystical marriage were reversed, that the Church were the Bridegroom and Christ the Bride. All this it seems to me is involved in the claim that a woman can represent God as a priest does.

The question may be asked by the reader, 'why should a woman not stand in such a position in the Church? Why should gender roles enter into the Christian teaching at all? The answer that Lewis supplies, an answer that is able to throw light not only upon his immediate question on women priests, but also the post-modern challenge to religious dogma. He writes (1990:91),

But Christians think that God Himself has taught us how to speak of Him. To say that it does not matter is to say that either all masculine imagery is not inspired, is merely human in origin, or else that, though inspired, it is quite arbitrary and unessential, and this is surely intolerable. It is also surely based on a shallow view of imagery. Without drawing upon religion, we know from our poetical experience that image and apprehension cleave closer together than common sense is here prepared to admit; that a child that has been taught to pray to a Mother in Heaven would have a religious life radically different from that of a

219

> Christian child. And as image and apprehension are in organic unity, so,
>
> for a Christian, are human body and human soul.

With the Lewisian concept of transposition in mind, let us consider the implications of what Lewis is saying above; let us consider two related examples. Firstly, it has already been confirmed that a pianist playing a score originally intended for a string quartet still faithfully reproduces its intended *essence* though playing it on a piano - only the *quality* of the score would be changed. Supposing however, a pianist opted to alter a significant number of notes that were printed on the score, and play it as improvised - it would not then still be considered as *essentially* the same score.

Secondly, if a blind person heard a description of a sunset that adequately compensated visual images for smell, touch, sound and taste, one could then consider the blind person's perception of the actual sunset as being accurate to vision in *essence*. If however, visual perception of a sunset was communicated to the blind person's remaining four senses in an inarticulate way, the very word, 'sunset' would have no essential accuracy to the visual reality.

In both of the cases above, it has to be agreed that a faithful and accurate correspondence between the *lower* to the *higher essence*,

is vital for any conception to qualify for the designation, *transposition.* We may also note here that in transposition, the *lower level* is expected to maintain a corresponding fidelity to the *higher level* even though at the lower level, the *higher* may be inconceivable. We can now proceed to consider Lewis' argument in the above passage. May a hypothetical religious reformer, in the light of transposition, substitute a female deity for the Male portrayed in Christian imagery and yet remain true to the essential higher reality transposed? Lewis writes (*God in the Dock* 1990:94),

> We cannot shuffle or tamper so much. With the Church, we are farther in: for there we are dealing with male and female not merely as facts of nature but as the live and awful shadows of realities utterly beyond our control and largely beyond our direct knowledge. Or rather, we are not dealing with them but (as we shall soon learn if we meddle) they are dealing with us.

Because Lewis held to a supernatural epistemology, transposition could be used to intelligently explain human conception of metaphysical reality via mythological expression. In the light of this the dogmatic nature of orthodox Christianity may be epistemologically justified as long as a supernatural is presupposed. The present epistemological debate therefore needs to be recognised as being based upon ontological presupposition.

3.7   IS ALL RELIGIOUS BELIEF EQUALLY VALID?

'In order to avoid unnecessary confusion, it is important to realise that in radical christology the Divine is forever embodied. The word is always already inscribed. Incarnation therefore, is not a once-and-for-all event, restricted to a specific time and place and limited to a particular individual.' Mark Taylor*, Erring: A Post-modern A/theology (1984:115).*

'Critical pedagogy needs a language that allows for competing solidarities and political vocabularies that do not reduce the issues of power, justice, struggle and equality to a single script, a master narrative that suppresses the contingent, historical and the everyday as a serious object of study.' Henry Giroux *Towards a Post-Modern Pedagogy (1991:50).*

'Willful modernist self-exclusion, the claim to stand outside, is only a delusion; the post-modernist insists that everything is included (within social reality), that nothing can achieve the autonomy or distance in which the modernists found their last defense against all-encompassing capitalism.' John McGowan, *Post-modernism and its critics (1991:4).*

The post-modern position on religion flows inevitably out of its epistemology. Human consciousness is held to be the product of linguistic paradigms - the values and truth convictions of an individual are

considered as merely being cultural constructs - each cultural paradigm contains within itself its own system of significance and legitimacy. Because of this position no religion is considered to be either true or false, such terminology does not come in to the issue at all. The purpose of religion to post-modern thinkers is totally pragmatic. Religion authenticates an individual's experience of life as well as solidifies, motivates, and morally directs the community. Because humanity is not, as other animals, motivated entirely by instinct, religion plays a vital part in the regulation of a human life. Religion has an innate power to unify and instill values that are necessary for the continuance of human survival (Shorto 1997:253). Post-modern innovators therefore, are certainly not against religion; it is their considered *abuse* of religion that this mind-set decries. A typical post-modern argument against any claim to a 'true' religion is illustrated by McCallum (1996:209),

> People might have a religious experience with such a higher power, but one thing is discounted: the importance of propositional truth - statements of fact that can be confirmed or denied by reason and evidence. Or to put it differently, post-modern worshippers are like post-modern readers: They are the source of truth - because truth is true if they really believe it - not the discoverers of truth, which is true whether they realise it or not.

Religion is encouraged in post-modernism - religion however, that is based on *logocentric metanarratives* (often referred to by post-modernists as religious *fundamentalism*) is firmly rejected. Shorto writes, (1997:238), 'That's what the Church (i.e. *fundamentalist* Church) doesn't understand

(i.e. free thought) because the Church is in the control business. That's why the Church claims that it is the source of infallible authority. We've got a lock on God - if you want God, come to us.' Post-modernism always considers *logocentricity* as a power-play (Foucault 1980:132). Although it is obviously not the Christian faith alone that is facing this post-modern challenge (all religions are having to come to terms with its challenge) it is Christianity in particular, along with Islam (the two overtly proselytising religions), that stand to lose most of its doctrinal presupposition and content should it acquiesce in any way to post-modern epistemological claims. The question needs to be asked therefore, how can Christianity, especially of the evangelical variety, justify its position in the intellectual climate of our day? Is there a reasonable response to post-modern epistemology that can be offered?

C. S. Lewis is able to offer a reasonable defence in this matter. In order to introduce his answer to our present problem it will be necessary to firstly highlight to post-modern argument. This may be done in syllogistic tablature.

PREMISE ONE: Post-modern epistemology considers all human consciousness to be solely derived from sentient experience that is systematised within a particular linguistic paradigm (Cahoone 1996:15).

PREMISE TWO: Religion is entirely a product of human consciousness (Taylor 1984:6, Lyotard 1984:xxiv).

CONCLUSION: Religion is only as real and as valid as it results from, and conforms to, the cultural paradigm of a particular human consciousness.

If the first syllogism can be accepted as contextually sound, we can develop a more complex one:

PREMISE ONE: A religion is as real and as valid only in so far as it conforms to the cultural paradigm of a particular human being (Cahoone 1996:15).

PREMISE TWO: Any religious world-views and value systems that may exist *outside* of a particular cultural paradigm, are epistemologically inconceivable to a person *inside* (Macintyre 1984:206, Lyotard 1984:xxiii)*.*

CONCLUSION: It is philosophically absurd, as well as morally improper, to attempt the proselytising of a member of a different cultural background into another religion (Giroux 1991:45).

If each cultural paradigm contains its own particular system of value and significance to the human experience, then no religion can ever be considered more *real* or *true* than any other. The post-modern consideration of comparative religion entails the acknowledgement that truth will always be, and can only ever be, a social and linguistic construct (McCallum 1996:34). Hinduism to a post-modernist, is certainly considered as being the *true* religion - but only insofar as it is being considered from within the Hindu cultural paradigm. The question, 'does

Islam work?' is always answered in the affirmative by a Muslim. The very idea of there being a religion that might be nearer to the *truth* than any other, is totally ruled out of court as being *logocentric totalism* by post-modern epistemology. Polytheism *is* the true religion for polytheists - pantheism *is* the true religion for pantheists - atheism *is* truth and reality for those who are atheists. David Hall writes (1991:65),

> Allusiveness requires vague boundaries of self and world. The most desirable circumstance is one in which images, as richly vague complexes capable of a variety of evocations, are communally fixed and protected as images...In any case, there is nothing behind the language in the form of structure or logos to which appeal may be made to establish the presence of objective truth. Meanings derive from the allusive play of differences among the words and images of the language.

The above challenge to orthodox Christian objectivity in truth needs to be effectively answered in a rational way. But can it? Lewis, I believe, would answer the claim that no religious knowledge is objectively measurable by relating ideology to *praxis* - in other words, by pointing out the obvious relationship that exists between what a person believes, and how a person acts. In an article entitled, "Man or Rabbit?" (*God in the Dock* 1990:68), Lewis writes,

> If Christianity should happen to be true, then it is quite impossible that those who know this truth, and those who don't should be equally well equipped for leading a good life. Knowledge of the facts must make a difference to one's actions. Suppose you found a man on the point of starvation and wanted to do the right thing. If you had no knowledge of medical science, you would probably give him

a large solid meal; and as a result, your man would die. That is what comes of

working in the dark. In the same way, a Christian and a non-Christian may both

wish to do good to their fellow men. The one believes that men are going to live

forever, that they were created by God and so built that they can find their true

and lasting happiness only in being united to God, that they have gone badly off

the rails, and that obedience to Christ is the only way back. The other believes

that men are an accidental result of the blind workings of matter, that they started

as mere animals and have more or less steadily improved, that they are going to

live for about seventy years, that their happiness is fully attainable by good social

services and political organisations, and that everything else (e.g. vivisection,

birth-control, the judicial system, education) is to be judged to be 'good' or 'bad'

simply in so far as it helps or hinders that kind of 'happiness'.

What Lewis is arguing here is that it is actually impossible to divorce

human behaviour from human thinking. There will always be a behavioural

consequence to a held belief. Lewis illustrates this point by giving an

example in the same article (1990:69),

> Again, where the Materialist would simply ask about a proposed action, 'Will it
>
> increase the happiness of the majority?' the Christian might have to say, 'Even if
>
> it does increase the happiness of the majority, we can't do it. It is unjust.' And all
>
> the time, one great difference would run through their whole policy. To the
>
> Materialist, things like nations, classes, civilisations must be more important than
>
> individuals, because the individuals only live seventy odd years each and the
>
> group may last for centuries. But to the Christian, individuals are more important,
>
> for they live eternally; and races, civilisations and the like, are in comparison, the
>
> creatures of a day.

227

> The Christian and the Materialist hold different beliefs about the universe. They can't both be right. The one who is wrong will act in a way which simply doesn't fit the real universe. Consequently, with the best will in the world, he will be helping his fellow creatures to their destruction.

In his article entitled, *Christian Reunion* (1990:21), he writes, 'To the very last, when two people differ on doctrine, logic proclaims that though both might be in error, it is impossible for both to be right. And error always to some extent disables'. Lewis' point may be more clearly realised if we use an extreme illustration out of our recent history in order to drive the argument home. We will start by defining the meaning of the word, *religion.* Religion is that phenomenon in human experience that involves three basic definitive characteristics (*Library of Modern Knowledge* 1979:694):

Firstly, a belief in a being, or cause, that is of more and superior significance than the individual (i.e. the Jewish Deity, *Yahweh*, the Hindu life-force, *Brahman*, the Chinese concept of *Tao*).

Secondly, a responsive and submissive behavioural pattern that is considered to be in optimum conformity to the pattern of the religion (i.e. an ethical code, behavioural code, a concept of *taboo*).

Thirdly, an *eschataolgical telos* - a goal that the religion's adherents are believed to be heading towards (i.e. The Buddhist conception of *Nirvarna,* the Christian *parousia*).

All religion will, in varying degrees, always involve the above three essential qualities.

Religion therefore, need not necessarily entail the worship and belief in a personal deity. The religion of Confucianism qualifies for the classification of religion as described in three points above, yet it contains in its teachings, no concept of personal deity at all (*Library of Modern Knowledge* 1979:711), Buddhism worships no personal deity (Lewis *Timeless at Heart* 1987:85). Religion need not be necessarily super-naturalistic. Hinduism for example, is pantheistic and considers existence as a monistic unit (*Library of Modern Knowledge* 1979:704).

In the light of this, it may be reasonably suggested that Maoist Communism was, in a very real sense, *a religion*. It held to the first point, in that it taught of the existence of a principle that was higher in significance, value, and priority, than the individual citizen - namely the State. It also contained the second quality of religion, an imposing behavioural pattern, a code of value and ethics. Thirdly, it cannot be denied that Maoist China motivated its citizens to strive passionately towards the eschatological goal of their ideology, a communist world society - a worker's *Utopia*. Maoist Communism could indeed be classified as a religion. The *little red book* containing the *Thoughts of Mao* was its scripture.

If however, we agree that Maoist communism qualifies for the title of religion, can we not also consider Nazi German ideology equally eligible for the same title? It is clearly evident from the records, that Nazi ideology considered the evolution of the *ubermensch* to be something transcending individual human worth and significance (*Time Life books* 1989:26), a prophetic leader inspired its ideology (i.e. Hitler), a behavioural code as well as a particular system of value was also imposed by the movement upon its citizens. Also, an eschatological goal was set, being the ideal world of Arian supermen (*Time life books* 1989:30). There can be little rational objection to the ideological Nazism of Hitler's Germany being termed a religion, as long as we use the qualifications for such a term as listed above. A crucial question in the light of this however, needs to be raised - If as it is claimed by post-modern epistemology, all religion is valid within its own cultural/linguistic paradigm, why should not the anti-Semitic, imperialistic, and warlike religion of Nazi ideology be granted the status of religious validity? Should not the Nazi value system be considered as being perfectly valid within what could be called the Nazi paradigm? The post-modern response to this question is that no religion may be tolerated that seeks to injure and dominate other, equally valid religious paradigms (Macintyre 1984:204). Religion that is tolerant and able to positively coexist with other religions for the good of society at large is, to post-modern epistemology, considered as valid religion. But here one cannot avoid noting an inconsistency. If all religions are closed within their own

particular cultural/linguistic monad, as contended by post-modern epistemology, then what can possibly be the factor that decides which particular religion is, and which is not, valid? In order for post-modernists to remain absolutely consistent to their epistemological convictions, no one value system (which is at best, merely the construct of a particular cultural/linguistic paradigm) should ever impose its own value system on any other unless such an imposition is admitted to be an entirely arbitrary affair. Most post-modernists would not wish to go so far as to admit to arbitrary moral definition, but it remains the only real option open to consistent and honest post-modern thinkers.

Lewis on the other hand can not be accused of any rational inconsistency in his argument for the conception of a universally true religion. Because of his supernaturalist epistemological foundation, he held to the reality of a categorical imperative that is experienced by all rational beings. This over-arching human awareness of basic *right* and *wrong* could be utilised as a measure of the moral qualitative content of every human act and intention. Lewis writes (*Christian Reflections* 1991:94), 'Unless we take our own standards to be something more than ours, to be in fact, an objective principle to which we are responding, we cannot regard that standard as valid.' In his allegory, *The Pilgrim's Regress* (1990:74), Lewis describes the epistemological scepticism of his own day in terms of being a prison of

231

consciousness. He writes of the story's hero, John's encounter with the philosophical spirit of his age,

> '"Do you not know that all of this country belongs to the Spirit of the Age?'
>
> 'I am sorry,' said John, 'I didn't know. I have no wish to trespass, I will go round some other way. I will not go through his country at all.'
>
> 'You fool,' said the captain, 'You are in his country now. This pass is the way out of it, not the way into it. He welcomes strangers. His quarrel is with runaways.'
>
> Then he called to one of his men and said, 'Here, Enlightenment, take this fugitive to our master'.
>
> A young man stepped out and clapped fetters on John's hands: then putting the length of chain over his own shoulder and giving it a jerk, he began to walk down the valley dragging John after him.

The denial of objective reality was not, to Lewis, as many now consider it to be, an opportunity for religious freedom (Lyotard 1984:67), but a dungeon of epistemological pessimism and ultimately, of philosophical despair. But may his position be considered to be an adequate refutation of the above post-modern contention? The Lewisian argument in favour of the concept of the possibility of one objectively true religion, may now be fully brought forward. Syllogistic tablature will hopefully express the argument more clearly.

PREMISE ONE: It is, according to post-modern epistemology, both philosophically absurd, and morally wrong for one to attempt to proselytise a member from a particular cultural/linguistic paradigm out of that paradigm and into one's own.

PREMISE TWO: The particular notion of *philosophical absurdity*, as well as the particular notion of *moral wrongness,* according to post-modern epistemology, are both *themselves* merely constructs of a particular paradigm - namely their own.

CONCLUSION: Post-modern epistemology is not able to rationally denounce any *metanarrative* claim in the field of religion if it wishes to remain consistent with its own epistemological premises.

If the above syllogism is sound, we may now proceed to establish Lewis' supernaturalist epistemological argument in favour of what post-modernists would refer to as *religious metanarrative*.

PREMISE ONE: What a person believes (i.e. values, trusts, and fears) is directly related to how a person behaves, lives and dies (*God in the Dock* 1990:68).

PREMISE TWO: There are many belief systems that result in attitudes and behaviour patterns that are ultimately negative and sometimes counter-productive towards human survival (i.e. Nazi ideology) (*Abolition of Man* 1978:34).

CONCLUSION: Some belief systems (i.e. religions) must therefore be of less validity in the context of human survival than others.

One of the most obvious inconsistencies resulting from post-modern epistemology is its ideological motivation. As McCallum states (1996:48), a good many post-modern innovators consider their position as being a

necessary and timely world-view, that will hopefully prove beneficial to the challenge of twenty-first century global multi-culturalism. Post-modern educational theorist Henry Giroux writes (1991:55),

> Such a position (i.e. post-modern epistemology) recognises that students have several or multiple identities, but also asserts the importance of offering students a language that allows them to reconstruct their moral and political energies in the service of creating a more just and equitable social order, one that undermines relations of hierarchy and domination.

The reason why he considers such a goal to be optimum, Giroux fails to mention, it certainly cannot be, according to his own epistemology because such an ideological goal is '*right', 'best',* or *true.* Lewis' argument for the validity of a concept of objectively true religion, on the other hand, is based upon a consistent epistemological rationality. It is on his supernaturalist and rationalistic foundation that Lewis proceeded to argue for the historicity of the Christ event (*God in the Dock* 1990:56), the claims made by Christ recorded in the scripture (*Mere Christianity* 1989:52), and the psychological connection and anthropological relevance that exists between the *Kerugma* and human experience (*The Four Loves* 1977:127). The scope of this dissertation does not cover these, the most commonly scrutinised aspects of Lewisian apologetics. It is the present writer's strong conviction that the full impacting weight that is implicit behind the apologetical writings of C. S. Lewis will not be fully realised in the next

generation, unless the present post-modern epistemological challenge to Christian objectivity is seriously addressed.

3.8   A CASE STUDY

In order to demonstrate the relevance of Lewis' position in the light of our current epistemological debate with post-modernism, an application will now be made. In order to establish a reasonable academic credence to the claim of Lewis that human consciousness has an innate accessibility to a reality existing somehow exterior to, and wholly other than, observable natural phenomena, (by means of four basic experiences, namely rationality, categorical imperative, *sehnsucht*, religious awe), I offer the following case study:

If Lewis' epistemological contention is to be granted credibility, it will be necessary to, with reasonable support, supply satisfactory evidence that validates his epistemological claim that members of widely varying cultures, all equally reveal upon examination, the supposed Lewisian innate awareness of a supernatural reality. In other words, if Lewisian epistemology is to be granted even a provisional credence, and then it should be firstly established that a normal, self-conscious, human member of any particular culture should show definite signs that such a comprehension indeed occurs. Each *reason-endowed* individual,

regardless of cultural background, should be able to be seen to possess an awareness of the following:

♦ The possession of a rationality that Lewis would regard as being universal in its basic structure.

♦ The awareness of an innate sense of *right* and *wrong* behaviour and attitude that transcends a merely contextual ethics.

♦ A sense of profound mystery or awe, that tends to motivate a person into what might be termed as a *religious*, or *mystical* state of mind.

♦ A sense of longing for a significance that is profounder than mere social and physical well being.

In order to establish such a demonstration in a way that will prove adequate for the present task, I shall compare two radically different cultures by noting the way that they respectively correspond to the above Lewisian criteria. I shall compare certain traits of modern Western culture with the culture of ancient Mesopotamia. Hopefully, if these two cultures can show at least a small but real measure of commonality in the area under discussion, then it will help to establish the reasonable credibility of Lewis' epistemology.

3.8.1 **Rationality:** Western culture possesses a rationality upon which it bases its practices, values and explanations. Western thinking, it is universally agreed, is primarily based upon binary polarisations such as true and false, cause and effect, valid and invalid, living and inanimate. Western thinkers arrive at their conclusions by means of the utilisation of logical argumentation, inductive inference, and syllogistic deduction. These are considered part and parcel of Western culture. Westerners are epistemologically rational, it is very generally believed. Now I believe that Lewis would fully agree with such a statement - Westerners are indeed epistemologically rationally inclined - but Lewis would claim that the same must be said for every self-conscious individual irrespective of one's cultural background.

It may be argued in response to this, that our knowledge of ancient Mesopotamian culture could not possibly confirm this, as Mesopotamian civilisation was based upon primitive and mythological thought patterns which are quite foreign to the scientific thinking patterns of modern Western thinkers. Ancient Mesopotamians believed in things like, demons, lucky charms and evil curses, whereas today, we do not. But with a little serious consideration, one discovers something quite different from this superficial consideration. Although ancient Mesopotamian thought

used a radically different *symbolism* by which to express and exercise their thinking, the very same rational structure that supports modern Western thinking is clearly evident. Western cosmology for example, is on the surface, radically different from ancient Mesopotamian cosmology. Where many Westerners think of cosmology in terms of a *big bang*, chemical reactions, and expanding galaxies, Mesopotamian thinkers considered the cosmos to be due to a pre-cosmic battle that took place between the god *Marduk* and his rival goddess, *Tiamat.* The body of the slain *Tiamat* was, to Mesopotamian sages, the explanation that was given for the phenomenon called the universe.

Now, considering the Western cosmology in comparison with the ancient Mesopotamian, one might be tempted to consider the vast difference in terminology as being certain evidence for the absolute cultural divergence of its culture and our own. But upon closer consideration, one finds that the radical divergence occurs only in regard to the *symbolism of terminology* . The '*scaffolding'* of rationality for both cultures, is exactly the same. Both cultures offer their cosmologies as an '*explanation*' as to '*why'* the universe exists, and '*how'* it came about. Both cultures, in other words, are asking the same question, both are assuming the same *cause/effect* scenario, and both are equally assuming that

significance may be applied to phenomena by means of intelligible explanation. Both cultures therefore, upon closer inspection, employ the very same scaffolding of rationality - the vast divergence between the two cultures, is found merely in the *symbolism* that is employed to structure the rationality. Upon inspection therefore, it cannot be seriously denied that ancient Mesopotamians asked the same rationalistic questions as do contemporary Western scientists. Why? How? When? Where? Who?

3.8.2 Categorical Imperative: It has often been assumed that every culture possesses its own value system and set of norms by which it protects, regulates society, and motivates its members. Lewis, as has been discussed in the first part of this dissertation, argued that there exists only one, single, categorically imperative morality that is experienced in the same way by every self-conscious human being, in every culture without exception. This contention could possibly be resisted, by the antagonist, by pointing out the radically differing behavioural patterns that seem evident between our modern Western culture and that of ancient Mesopotamian society. Our culture, for example, frowns upon the imperial military domination of one nation over another, the ritual sacrificing of human beings, the harsh judgements imposed upon people who

have committed relatively insignificant crimes, the misuse of women, the torture of prisoners, etc. It could be argued that a culture that practiced the above atrocities must have lived under a radically different value system than our own. But is this really so? On closer examination, it will be noted that the peculiar behavioural patterns found in ancient Mesopotamian culture, were motivated primarily by their own particular cultural/linguistic comprehension of the very same morality that we know in our own culture today.

An example may help to illustrate my point: Whereas in Western culture, one would surely disapprove of the execution of a person accused of practicing sorcery. Western scruples about freedom of religion and the value of human life would guarantee such a resistance. Such scruples, however, were not the case in ancient Mesopotamia. The violent execution of people accused in ancient Mesopotamia of sorcery was frequent and widespread. The penalty for one practicing sorcery was usually a cruel and painful death. Does this however, suggest that ancient Mesopotamians were oblivious to the sense morality that we now enjoy? Not at all. The above divergence is entirely a matter of world-view - not a matter of morality. It needs to be remembered that the ancient Mesopotamian truly believed that sorcery was a very real and immanent *danger* to his life, family, and society. To this particular

mind-set, that perceived as the ultimate *good*, was to rid the world of such a threat as sorcery. Lewis writes (*Christian Reflections* 1991:105),

> The method is to treat as differences in judgements of value what are really differences in belief about fact. The human sacrifice, or persecution of witches, are cited as evidence of a radically different morality. But the real difference lies elsewhere. We do not hunt witches because we disbelieve in their existence. We do not kill men to avert pestilence because we do not think that pestilence can be thus averted. We do 'sacrifice' men in war, and we do hunt spies and traitors.

The moral intention that motivated the Mesopotamian act of killing sorcerers was, in actual fact, comparable with the Western ideal to protect our family from disease by spraying insecticide and killing flies. Western culture does not approve of ritual human sacrifice, but that is simply because it does not believe that such a sacrifice would produce any ultimate good. Western culture does, very often condone human sacrifice when it comes to warfare. It is therefore, *perception* of reality that motivates both Western and ancient Mesopotamian culture, and not the categorical imperative. In both cultures ample evidence may be produced, that will convince the sceptic that both cultures praised faithfulness, honesty, and fairness, and frowned upon treachery, deception and injustice. An honest thinker has to finally admit that a single universal morality can be recognised in every culture, the cultural differences become

apparent primarily in the interpretation of contextualised experience of the categorical imperative. Lewis writes (*Christian Reflections* 1991:104),

> If a man will go into a library and spend a few days with the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* he will soon discover the massive unanimity of the practical reason in man. From the Babylonian *Hymn to Samos,* from the Laws of Manu, the *Book of the Dead*, the Analects, the Stoics, the Platonists, from Australian aborigines and Redskins, he will collect the same triumphantly monotonous denunciations of oppression, murder, treachery and falsehood. The same injunctions of kindness to the aged, the young and the weak, of almsgiving impartiality and honesty...There are of course, differences. There are even blindnesses in particular cultures - just as there are savages who cannot count up to twenty. But the pretence that we are presented with a mere chaos - that no outline of universally accepted value shows through - is simply false and should be contradicted in season and out of season wherever it is met.

3.8.3 Religious Awe: Is there a universal sense of mystical profundity in collective human consciousness? Lewis writes (the Problem of Pain 1990:15),

> We do not know how far back in history this feeling goes. The earliest men almost certainly believed in things which would excite the feelings in us if we believed in them, and it seems therefore probable that numinous awe is as old as humanity itself. But our main concern is not with its dates. The important thing is that somehow or other it has come into existence, and is

widespread, and does not disappear from the mind with the growth of knowledge and civilisation.

It cannot be denied that such an experience may be evoked by any number of different sources. Where some may encounter a sense of profound awe and mystery by means of watching the stars, another may encounter the same experience when earnestly praying, or others, may be awed when under the influence of certain chemical stimulants. The question however, is not *how* such an experience may be caused, but *if* such an experience is indeed caused, is *universal,* and if it can be recognised as such?

If we compare the radically different cultures of our own Western *ethos* with the ancient Mesopotamian culture on this issue, it should become evident that both cultures show that such an experience of the numinous indeed occurs. Both modern Western, as well as ancient Mesopotamian literature, continuously refer in many different ways, to the fact that the religious instinct is a universal and compelling reality (although this instinct might be manifested in any number of different ways, it is still evident as an identifiable reality). The abundance of differing religious and metaphysical teachings and religious communities within our

243

contemporary Western society should be sufficient confirmation to us that human consciousness in our own culture is (however bleakly), aware of a reality somehow of greater significance than the individual's own mere phenomenal experience of life. Archaeological evidence reveals that Mesopotamian culture also, was saturated in a sense of the noumenal experience. Temples, priesthoods, mythologies, sacrificial systems, all confirm this fact.

3.8.4   **The Lure of *Sehnsucht*:** Is there a universal sense of desire in the human consciousness that longs for something other than immediate psychological and physical gratification? Such an inner drive may be pointed out as clearly evident in our own Western culture in a number of different ways: Our art, music, and literature convincingly confirm the existence of *sehnsucht* in our society. The psychological evidence of our human urge for significance and actualisation, the historical and biographical evidence which reveals again and again, generations striving after some particular object that it is hoped will authenticate and justify one's existence. *Sehnsucht* may not be so easily dismissed as to its being a widely experienced reality in our Western culture - but was it equally a reality in ancient Mesopotamia? Perhaps the now

well-known ancient Sumerian, *Epic of Gilgamesh,* written some four thousand years ago, will help answer that question*. (Library of Modern Knowledge* 1979:74),

> Gilgamesh set out in search of the secret of immortality. He surmounted many obstacles, and at the furthest extremities of the universe he sought the advice of the only man who had obtained immortality - Utnapishtim. The latter tried to persuade Gilgamesh, maintaining that immortality was a life of boredom. But Utnapishtim's wife enables Gilgamesh to obtain the plant of rejuvenation - which was immediately stolen by a serpent. The quest was hopeless, and Gilgamesh resigned himself to a mortal state.

It may be seen in the above four paragraphs, that it is indeed possible for one to gather evidence in support of Lewis' argument that human consciousness possesses an innate awareness of a supernatural reality, and that this innate consciousness is something that is universally experienced. It is something experienced regardless of the particular cultural programming that one has received. It can be argued that cultures are indeed, primarily distinct from one another due to linguistics, and grounds of differing symbolism. The particular *significance* ascribed to an experience, in other words, will naturally differ from culture to culture - but the *experience* of phenomenon *per se,* is

always a constant. I have, in this case study, attempted to make this point more clearly evident, by comparing two radically different cultural paradigms, and showing how there is sufficient evidence of the four Lewisian human contacts with supernatural reality to reasonably support Lewis' case.

In order to summarise and justify the present case study, I will employ a Socratic dialogue.

Question: How does C. S. Lewis philosophically justify his opposition to epistemological reductionism in any shape or form?

Answer: He holds to an epistemology that is grounded on the assumption of an innate human consciousness of supernatural.

Question: Can Lewis' supernatural epistemology be reasonably validated?

Answer: Yes. Lewis appeals to four possible indications within human experience that suggest a supernatural reality. These are rationality, the categorical imperative, the universal lure of *sehnsucht*, and the universality of numinous awe.

Question: But are not such concepts as these merely constructs of a particular Western cultural paradigm?

Answer: Not at all. Even a casual perusal of the relevant humanities will reveal the fact that all cultures appear to experience, or to have experienced these above four concepts.

Question: What does a universal innate awareness of the supernatural prove anyway?

Answer: It stands in favour of the argument that the phenomenon of human consciousness need not be reduced to mere culture and linguistics. Such an epistemology will inevitably undermine all human aspiration for transcendence, and confine the human mind to the confines of an existential absolutism.

Question: Why does Lewis contend so fervently against such an epistemology?

Answer: Because true Christian apologetics will be utterly paralysed unless such epistemologies are refuted or at very least, undermined.

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

There is one vital point that needs to be emphasised at the very onset of this conclusion in order to ensure an effective grasp of the topic discussed in this work. It needs to be underlined in the strongest possible terms, that both post-modern epistemology as well as the epistemology of C. S. Lewis equally base their respective positions upon a presupposed foundation. Post-modern epistemology grounds its contentions within a paradigm of linguistic, sociological and psychological assumption. C. S. Lewis grounds his epistemology upon the assumption that human consciousness is innately aware of the supernatural realm. The present work can not be truly appreciated in an academic sense, unless this point is recognised as being basic to the entire argument of the dissertation.

The epistemologies of both C. S. Lewis and post-modern thinkers start from particular presupposed philosophical assumptions. Neither of these epistemological assumptions can be philosophically vindicated in a categorical, concrete, or absolute manner, and both epistemologies depend upon, for their philosophical validation, evidence that is selective and contextual in nature. Post-modern epistemology relies upon the related findings of academic disciplines such as psychology, sociology, linguistics, and anthropology. C. S. Lewis, on the other hand, points to suggested evidence of human experience of the supernatural (i.e. rationality, the categorical imperative, *sehnsucht*, and religious awe) in order to establish his claims.

What must be admitted by all serious students of epistemology, is the absolute dependence of all world-views *without exception*, upon foundational epistemological presupposition, and as such, can only be philosophically validated by means of selective and contextual configuration. Unless this is realised prior to any academic critical examination, a particular world-view may appear to be irrefutably valid whilst in reality it will be entirely due to the examiner's own rational *perspective*. As one stands rationally inside a particular philosophical paradigm, all of its premises will naturally be found to be systematised and inter-related. This phenomenon however, does in no way vindicate a world-view's validity outside of its own paradigm. It is therefore essential that no epistemology be granted any privilege of credence without first recognising this fact.

Once the above contention has been conceded to, it follows that both post-modern epistemology as well as the world-view of C. S. Lewis stand on equal ground before objective and critical scrutiny. Outside of their own particular paradigms, both require the same objective examination - both are obliged to rationally bear the same burden of proof. Unless a philosophy can objectively justify its claims in a way that is answerable to intelligent criticism, then it has no right to impose its position on the minds of thinking people outside of arbitrary domination and control. To demand an exemption from such a critical examination, would be to reduce all philosophy other than one's own, to irrelevance and absurdity, and to claim the sole exception to this rule to be one's

own philosophy of the moment. Although this is indeed the implication of post-modern epistemology (or at very least, its unavoidable consequence), it remains as a philosophical system, somewhat inconsistently, in dialogue with philosophy in general.

The question may be raised then, which of the two epistemologies presented in this dissertation appears the more in line with actuality, philosophically credible, and contextually consistent? The answer to that question will obviously depend upon the epistemological bias of the reader. The present writer is in no way deluded into an ignorance of the subjectivity bound nature of human interpretation. This being stated, however, I believe that the present dissertation has at very least, exposed one significant philosophical inconsistency that post-modern epistemology seems incapable of accounting for - and that is - the very ground of its fundamental contention. If, as post-modern epistemology teaches, no over-arching standard of truth really exists, and that all human experience of such, is in reality, merely social/linguistic construction of contextual signification - a reality exclusive to one particular paradigm - then how does one account for the very claim argued for? If all *metanarrative* thinking is denounced in post-modernism, what justifies the very rejection of *metanarrative?*

On closer inspection of post-modern epistemology, it is discovered that an ideological motivation lies at its core. Such ideology (the call for inter-cultural tolerance and equal rights) is simply assumed without explanation in much of

post-modern writing. It needs to be asked therefore, how such moral and ethical convictions may be demanded universally, as well as imposed upon those whom the mind-set is now educating, while such a demand and imposition absolutely contradicts the epistemological foundation that support its very claim? Such an obvious philosophical inconsistency begs the question, and yet seems to be considered to be irrelevant in post-modern circles. The claim by post-modernists to stand outside of *Western logocentric critical objectivism,* seems to me, to be a mere *evasion* of the question - especially due to the fact that post-modernism offers no alternative to objective and critical scrutiny, and depends upon this very structure for other purposes.

The epistemology of C. S. Lewis, on the other hand, tends to be philosophically consistent, as well as systematically synchronic in all of its basic premises. Lewis is, in his epistemology, able to account for his cosmology, his ethical imperatives, as well as his ideological assumptions. Although it is generally held that a supernatural epistemology bears the burden of proof in its court, and that post-modern thinking is more realistic and consistent with human experience of actuality, the opposite is actually found to be the case. Post-modern epistemology claims to convey no knowledge at all save the knowledge that true and real knowledge is an epistemological impossibility. From such a foundational launching pad however, post-modern innovators construct and seek to impose elaborate value systems and methodologies for the transformation of economics,

health, education, and religion, in fact for the transformation of the entire multi-cultural world into a New World order.

The following table representing the two epistemological presuppositions will illustrate the above paragraph.

The post-modern epistemological position on truth: *'The idea that truth is a correspondent between statements and objective reality has been subject to a great deal of criticism. Much of this criticism is based upon confusion, inasmuch as the critics often while verbally rejecting positivism, still presuppose the positivistic equation of the meaning of a statement with the means of its verification.'* David Ray Griffin (1988:29).

The Lewisian epistemological position on truth: *'I aim tonight only at reversing the popular belief that reality is totally alien to our minds. My answer to that view consists simply in restating it in the form: 'Our minds are totally alien to reality'. Put that way, it reveals itself as a self-contradiction. For if our minds are totally alien to reality then all our thoughts, including this thought, are worthless.'* De Futilitate (*Christian Reflections* 1991:96).

The post-modern epistemological position on thought as human construct: *'Rorty and Foucault, respectively, have argued that the 'mind' and 'sexuality' are*

historical 'inventions'. And Patrick Heelan has shown that our most basic perceptions of space have a cultural history.' Susan Bordo (1987:117).

The Lewisian epistemological position on thought as human construct: '*My point is that those who stand outside all judgements of value cannot have any ground for preferring one of their impulses to another except the emotional strength of that impulse.' (The Abolition of Man* 1978:40).

The post-modern epistemological position on language: *'The forms of a person's thought are controlled by inexorable laws of pattern of which he is unconscious. These patterns are the unperceived intricate systematisations of his own language… Every language is a vast pattern-system, different from others, in which are culturally ordained forms and categories by which the personality not only communicates, but also analyses nature, notices or neglects types of relationships and phenomena, channels his reasoning, and builds the house of his consciousness.'* Benjamin Whorf (Wiley 1956:43).

The Lewisian epistemological position on language: *'Whatever is positive in the conception of the spiritual has always been contained in them (i.e. words); it is only its negative aspect (immateriality) which had to wait for recognition until abstract thought was fully developed. The material imagery has never been taken literally by anyone who has reached the stage when he could understand what 'taking it literally' meant.' (Miracles* 1990:82).

The post-modern epistemological position on propositional dogmatism:

'The pluralism of doctrines and theories within a single culture such as ours, as well as the pluralism of cultures, makes any claim to the truth of things an implicitly political act. Dogmatism, totalitarianism, and narrow intolerance are all directly connected with unjustified claims to final truth.' David Hall (1991:58).

The Lewisian epistemological position on propositional dogmatism: *'What I am trying to say might be interpreted to mean that doctrines 'don't matter', and that the essence of the spiritual life lay either in the affections or in some 'mystical' experience to which the intelligence is simply irrelevant. That the spiritual life transcends both intelligence and morality, we are probably all agreed. But I suppose it transcends them as poetry transcends grammar, and does not merely exclude them as algebra excludes grammar.' (Christian Reunion and other Essays* 1990:21).

The post-modern epistemological position on religion's validity: *'In order to avoid unnecessary confusion, it is important to realise, that in radical Christology the divine is forever embodied. The word is always already inscribed. Incarnation therefore, is not a once-and-for-all event, restricted to a specific time and place and limited to a particular individual.'* Mark C. Taylor (1984:115).

The Lewisian epistemological position on religion's validity: *'If Christianity should happen to be true, then it is quite impossible that those who know this*

255

truth and those who don't should be equally well equipped for leading a good life.
Knowledge of the facts must make a difference to one's actions.' (*God in the*
Dock 1990:68).

A further impression that may be gleaned from this study is that the Church need
not be intimidated by the prevailing post-modern *zeitgeist*. It would seem, judging
by the volume of academic Christian writing on the subject of post-modernism
and the Church, that it is widely believed to be the call of the hour for the Church
to conform to, and adapt itself to, post-modern needs, language and culture.
Church growth leaders seem to be increasingly imploring ministers to abandon
'outworn' and 'obsolete' methodologies of evangelism, and adopt new ones that
are more 'contextual' and 'relevant' to the needs of the moment. It cannot be too
strongly stated that such a compromise with this mind-set will result in the
ultimate self-contradiction of our faith.

What is often not considered in such a call for the Church to adapt to post-
modern thinking, is that the very foundational assumption in which the entire
post-modern mind-set is epistemologically rooted, is based upon the
philosophically unverifiable presupposition that truth is something that is relative,
and that reality is, in the final analysis, a mere *interpretation* of experience. Such
an epistemological position not only contradicts the idea of objective truth, but
also openly opposes it. Orthodox Christianity, on the other hand, is based upon
the assumption that human consciousness is inseparably interwoven with

supernatural reality - the very *kerugmatik* declaration of the Gospel is something to Christians, that is always expressed *imperatively.* It needs to be, in the light of this, more universally realised in academic Christian circles, that any epistemological compromise with post-modern thinking, is in the final analysis, a rational inconsistency. Such a compromise will never advance the Church's interests in the society at large, but will ultimately only serve to dilute and disengage effective Christian witness altogether. Orthodox Christianity always presupposes, and is always founded upon super-naturalism. If this ground is denied it, then Christianity ceases to be ontologically what it has been for the past two thousand years. It may indeed retain the orthodox terminologies, but it will no longer be the same faith that has been believed upon and confessed by all previous generations. Post-modern epistemology, to the present writer's understanding, seems to be one of the major challenges facing historical orthodoxy in our time, and it is upon this conviction, that the present dissertation was prepared. Lewis shows us in his Christian writings, that such a world-view as post-modernism, with its reductionist epistemology will inevitably result in a particular attitude to life, humanity, and the future, that will be conditioned to match the mind-set. For a Christian to claim therefore, to be a *post-modernist* in the epistemological sense of the word, would have to imply a serious contradiction in terms.

We learn from this study that the writings of C. S. Lewis are still just as much applicable and relevant to our post-modern age at the turn of the twenty-first

century, as they were when they were originally written and addressed to modernist antagonists in the nineteen -forties and fifties. Lewis can in no way be simply dismissed as being literary obsolete and irrelevant. He seemed in many of his Christian works, to anticipate the eventual demise of modernism with its unshakable confidence in science and technology, and expected the rise of a mind-set that would deny truth and objectivity altogether. It may be interesting to consider whether, in some fifty years or so, post-modernism as an epistemology will still be speaking to the thinking people of that time in a way that will still be relevant and valuable. I somehow think that Lewis is going to long survive post-modern epistemology.

In his posthumous book, *Prayer: Letters to Malcolm* (1977:70), Lewis expresses the very essence of his epistemological confidence in this poem,

'They tell me Lord, that when I seem

To be in speech with you,

Since but one voice is heard, it's all a dream,

One talker aping two.

Sometimes it is, yet not as they

Conceive it. Rather I

Seek in myself the things I hoped to say,

But lo! my wells are dry.

Then, seeing me empty, you forsake

The listener's role and through

My dumb lips breathe and into utterance wake

The thoughts I never knew.

And thus you neither need reply

Nor can; thus while we seem

Two talkers, thou art one forever, and I

No dreamer, but thy dream.'

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anderson, N. (1990) *The Bondage Breaker*.   Harvest House Publishers, Eugene, Oregon.

Appignanesi, R. (2003) *Introducing Postmodernism.* Icon Books, Cambridge.

Arthur, K. (1991) *Lord is it Warfare*?   Multomah Books, Sisters.

Ayer, A. (1946)   *Language, Truth and Logic*.   Dover Books, New York.

Bell, D. (1966) *The Coming of Post Industrial Society*. Basic Books, New York.

Bencivenga, E. (1987) *Kant's Copernican Revolution*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Blanchard, J. (2000) *Does God believe in Atheists*? Evangelical Press, Darlington.

Brey, J. (1994) *Creeds, Councils and Christ*. Intervarsity Press, Leicester.

Bordo, S. (1977) *The Flight to Objectivity: Essays on Cartesianism and Culture*. State University of New York Press, Albany.

Brooke, T. (1998) *The Conspiracy to Silence the Son of God*. Harvest House Publisher, Eugene, Oregon.

Brown, R. (1987) *Prepare for War*. Chick Publications, Chino.

260

Bruner, J. (1986) *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge.

Brunner, E. (1966) *The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption*. Lutterworth Press, London.

Bubner, R. (1977) *German Idealist Philosophy*. Penguin Books, London.

Cahoone, L. (1996) *From Modernism to Postmodernism*. Blackwell Publishers, Oxford.

Campolo, A. (1985) *Partly Right*. Word Books, Milton Keynes.

Capuzzi, F. A. (ed) (1977) *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*. Harper and Row, New York.

Chandler, R. (1989) *Understanding the New Age*. Word Publishing, Milton Keynes.

Christenson, E, (1991) *Battling the Prince of Darkness*. Scripture Press, Aversham on the Hill.

Christenson, N.   (1979) *C S Lewis on Scripture*. Hodder & Stoughton, London.

Codrington, G. and Swartz, S. (1999) '*Challenges Facing Youth Ministry in the 21st Century'.* The SA Baptist Journal of Theology, vol 6, 120-133.

Cupitt, D. (1998) The *Religion of Being*. SCM Press, London

Dancy, J. (1987) *Berkeley - An Introduction*. Alan Sutton Publishing, Gloucester.

Deist, F E. (1995) '*Text, Textuality and Textual Criticism'*. Journal of North West Semitic languages, vol 21/2, 59-66.

Derrida, J. (1974) *The End of the Book and the Beginning of Writing*. John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.

Derrida, J. (1982) *Margins of Philosophy*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

De Saussure, F. (1966) *Course in General Linguistics*. McGraw-Hill, New York.

Eliade, M. (1959) *The Sacred and Profane*. Harcourt, Brace and World, New York.

Foshaugen, E T. (1999) '*An Incarnational Engaged Worship and Spirituality'*. The SA Baptist Journal of Theology, vol 6, 41-51.

Foshaugen, E T. (2004) '*Response to Wilson's Article'.* The SA Baptist Journal of Theology, vol 11, 142-145.

Foucault, M. (1977) *Nature, Genealogy, History*. Cornell University Press, New York.

Godwin, R. (1994) *To Hell with the Devil*. Sword Publishing, Aberdeen.

Giroux, H A. (1991) *Postmodernism, Feminism and Cultural Politics*. State University of New York Press, Albany.

Green, R L. (1974) *C S Lewis – A Biography.* Harper Collins, London.

Griffin, D R. (1988) *The Re-enchantment of Science.* State University of New York Press, Albany.

Groothuis, D R. (1986) *Unmasking the New Age.* Intervarsity Press, Leicester.

Groothuis, D R. (1990) *Revealing the New Age.* Intervarsity Press, Leicester.

Habermas, J. (1987) *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity.* M I T Press, Cambridge.

Hall, S and Gieben, B. (eds) (1992) *Formation of Modernity.* Open University Press, London.

Hawkes, T. (1977) *Structuralism and Semantics.* Methuen, London.

Hirsch, E D. (1967) *The Validity of Interpretation.* Yale University Press, New Haven.

Horton, M. (1990)   *The Agony of Deceit.* Moody Press, Chicago.

Hodge, A A. (1991) *Outlines of Theology.* Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh.

Hooper, W. (1992) *Daily Readings with C S Lewis.* Fontana Publishers, London.

Horton, M S. (1992) *Power Religion.* Moody Press, Chicago.

Jencks, C. (1984) *The Language of Post Modern Architecture*. Rizzoli, New York.

Jones, M. (1991) *The Universe Upstairs*. Frameworks, Leicester.

Kraft, C. K. (1992) *Christianity in Culture*. Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York.

Lategan, B. (1992) *The Reader and Beyond: Theory and Practice in South African Reception Studies.* Human Sciences Research Council, Pretoria.

Lewis, C S. (1990) (7th impression) *The Pilgrim's Regress*. Fount Publications, London.

Lewis, C S. (1991) (2nd impression) *Timeless at Heart*. Fount Publications, London.

Lewis, C S. (1985) (2nd impression) *First and Second Things*. Fount Publications, London.

Lewis, C S. (1990) *Christian Reunion and Other Essays*. Fount Publications, London.

Lewis, C S. (1990) (29th impression) *The Problem of Pain*. Fount Publications, London.

Lewis, C S. (1991) (6th impression) *Christian Reflections*. Fount Publications, London.

Lewis, C S. (1990) (9th impression) *God in the Dock*. Fount Publications, London.

Lewis, C S. (1978) (2nd impression)) *Till we have Faces*. **Fount Publications, London.**

Lewis, C S. (1989). (25th impression) *Mere Christianity*. **Fount Publications, London.**

Lewis, C S. (1989) (10th impression) *Fern-seed and Elephants*. **Fount Publications, London.**

Lewis, C S. (1977) (2nd impression) *Screwtape Proposes a Toast and other pieces*. **Fount Publications, London.**

Lewis, C S. (1990) (13th impression) *Miracles*. **Fount Publications, London.**

Lewis, C S. (1977) (4th impression) *The Four Loves*. **Fount Publications, London.**

Lewis, C S. (1977) (3rd impression) *Prayer Letters to Malcolm.* **Fount Publications, London.**

Lewis, C S. (1977) (11th impression) *The Great Divorce*. **Fount Publications, London.**

Lewis, C S. (1971) (10th impression) *Surprised by Joy.* **Fount Publications, London.**

Lewis, C S. (1978) (3rd impression) *The Abolition of Man*. **Fount Publications, London.**

Lewis, C S. (1966) (2nd impression) *A Grief Observed*.   **Faber & Faber, London.**

Lewis, C S. (1992) (5th impression) *An Experiment in Criticism*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Levi-Strauss, C. (1969) *The Raw and the Cooked*.   Harper and Row, New York.

Liardon, R. (1995) *How to Survive an Attack*. Embassy Publishing, Laguna Hills.

Lyotard, J F. (1984) *The Post Modern Condition : A Report on Knowledge*. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.

Macintyre, A. (1984) *After Virtue*. University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame.

Mayhue, D. (1999) *Taking the Church to the Doctor's Surgery* (Pg10 – 11). Sword and Trowel, Vol III, London.

 McCallum, D. (1996) *The Death of Truth*. Bethany House Publishers, Minneapolis.

McGowan, J. (1991) *Postmodernism and its Critics*. Cornell University Press, New York.

Murray, I H. (2001)   *Evangelicism Divided*.   Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh.

Nicholi A M. (2003) *The Question of God- C S Lewis and Sigmund Freud debate God, Love, Sex, and the Meaning of Life*. Free Press, New York.

Palmer,D. (1996) *Does the Center Hold?* Mayfield publishing, Mountainview.

Pearce, J. (1996) *Wisdom and Innocence*. Hodder and Stoughton, London.

Peters, T C. (1998) *Simply C S Lewis*.   Kingsway Publishers, Eastbourne.

Prince, D. (1990)   *Blessing or Curse*. Word Books, Milton Keynes.

Rorty, R. (1991) *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Rowlands, M. (2003) *The Philosopher at the End of the Universe.* Elbury Press, London.

Sayer, G. (1997) *Jack. A Life of C S Lewis*.   Hodder & Stoughton, London.

Schakle, P J. (1984) *Reason and Imagination in C S Lewis*. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids.

Shorto, R. (1997) *Gospel Truth*. Hodder & Stoughton, London.

Smail, T; Walker, A & Wright, N. (1995) *Charismatic Renewal*.   SPCK Publishers, London.

Smail, T; Walker, A & Wright, N. (1994) *The Love of Power, or the Power of Love*. Bethany House Publishers, Minneapolis.

Song, A. (2000) '*After the Parlement – Three Christian Evaluations'*. The SA Baptist Journal of Theology, vol 7, 190-192.

Springer, K. (1987) *Riding the Third Wave.* Struik Books, Cape Town.

Taylor, M C. (1984) *Erring: A Post Modern A/Theology*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Tilghman, B R. (1994) *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*. Blackwell Publishers, Oxford.

Time Life books (1989) *Storming to Power*. Alexandria Virginia.

Tomlinson, D. (1995) *The Post Evangelical*. Triangle Books, London.

Urmson, J O. (1983) *Western Philosophy and Philosophers*. Hutchinson Publishing, London.

Walker, A. (1998)   *Rumours of Heaven*. Eagle Publishing, Guildford.

Whorf, B. (1956) *Language, Thought and Reality*. Wiley Publications, New York.

Wimber, J. (1985) *Power Evangelism.* Hodder and Stoughton, London.

Winfield, M. (2001) *Litigation in Heaven's Court Room on Behalf of the Church* (Pg108-126). South African Baptist Journal of Theology

Witsius, H. (1993) *The Apostles Creed*. Volume 1, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, Philipsburg.

APPENDIX NO 1

Lewis supplies the following list as an appendix to his work, The *Abolition of Man* (1978:49). The list may be just as helpful to my own reader as well, in establishing Lewis' primary evidence for supernatural reality, the Categorical Imperative. He writes, 'The following illustrations from the Natural Law are collected from such sources as come readily to the hand of one who is not a professional historian. The list makes no pretense at completeness...It is at least arguable that every civilisation we find has been derived from another civilisation and, in the last resort, from a single centre - 'carried' like an infectious disease or like the Apostolical succession.'

1.) The Law of General Beneficence.

a.) Negative: I have not slain men.' (Ancient Egyptian. From the confession of the Righteous Soul, 'Book of the Dead'. v. Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics vol. 5, p. 478).

'Do not murder.' (Ancient Jewish Ex. 20:13).

'Terrify not men, or God will terrify thee.' (Ancient Egyptian. Precepts of Ptahetep. H. R. Hall, Ancient History of the Near East. p. 133).

'In Nastrond (i.e. Hell), I saw ...murderers.' Old Norse. Volospa 38, 39).

'I have not brought misery upon my fellows. I have not made the beginning of every day laborious in the sight of him who worked for me.' (Ancient Egyptian. Confession of a Righteous Soul. ERE v.478).

'I have not been grasping.' (Ancient Egyptian Ibid.).

'Who meditates oppression, his dwelling is overturned. (Babylonian. Hymn to Samas. ERE v.445).

'He who is cruel and calumnious has the character of a cat.' (Hindu. Laws of Manu. Janet, *Histoire de la Science Politique,* vol 1, p. 6).

'Slander not.' (Babylonian Hymn to Samas. ERE v. 445).

'Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.' (Ancient Jewish. Ex. 20:16).

'Utter not a word by which anyone could be wounded.' (Hindu. Janet p.7).

'Has he...driven an honest man from his family? Broken up a well cemented clan? (Babylonian. List of Sins from incantation tablets. ERE v.446).

'I have not caused hunger. I have not caused weeping.' (Ancient Egyptian ERE 446).

'Never do to others what you would not like them to do to you.' (Ancient Chinese. Analects of Confucius, trans. A. Waley, xv. 23; cf. xii. 2).

'Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart.' (Ancient Jewish. Leviticus 19:17).

'He whose heart is in the smallest degree set upon goodness will dislike no-one.' (Ancient Chinese Analects iv. 4).

b.) Positive: 'Nature urges that a man should wish human society to exist and should wish to enter it.' (Roman Cicerio, *De Officiis,* i. 1v.).

'By the fundamental Law of Nature, Man (is) to be preserved as much as possible.' (Locke Treatise of civil Govt. ii. 3).

'When the people have multiplied what next should be done for them? The Master said, Enrich them. Jan Chi'iu said, When one has enriched them, what next should be done for them? The Master said, Instruct them. (Ancient Chinese, Analects viii. 9).

'Speak kindness...Show good will.' (Babylonian. Hymn to Samas. ERE v 445).

'Men were brought into existence for the sake of men that they might do one another good.' (Roman. Cicero, *De off.* 1. vii).

'Man is man's delight.' (Old Norse. *Havamal* 47).

'He who is asked for alms should always give.' (Hindu. Janet 1. 7).

'What good man regards any misfortune as no concern of his?' (Roman. Juvenal xv. 140).

'I am a man: nothing human is alien to me.' (Roman. Terence, *Heaut. Tim.*).

'Love thy neighbour as thyself.' (Ancient Jewish. Leviticus 19:18).

'Love the stranger as thyself.' (Ancient Jewish. ibid 33, 34).

'Do to men what you wish men to do to you.' (Christian. Matt. 7:12).

2.) The Law of Special Beneficence.

'It is upon the trunk that a gentleman works. When that is firmly set up, the Way grows. And surely proper behaviour to parents and elder brothers is the trunk of goodness.' (Ancient Chinese. Analects i. 2).

'Brothers shall fight and be each other's bane.' (Old Norse. Account of the evil age before the World's end. Volospa 45).

'Has he insulted his elder sister?' (Babylonian. List of sins. ERE v. 446).

'You will see them take care of their kindred and the children of their friends...never reproaching them in the least.' (Redskin. Le Jeune, quoted ERE v. 437).

'Love thy wife studiously. Gladden her heart all thy life long.' (Ancient Egyptian. ERE v. 481).

'Nothing can ever change the claims of kinship for a right thinking man.' (Anglo Saxon. Beowulf, 2600).

'Did not Socrates love his own children, though he did so as a free man and as one not forgetting that the gods have the first claim on our friendship?' (Greek. Epictetus, iii. 24).

'Natural affection is a right thing and according to Nature.' (Greek ibid. 1. xi).

'I ought not to be unfeeling like a statue but should fulfill both my natural and artificial relations, as a worshipper, a son, a brother, and a citizen.' (Greek. ibid, 111. ii).

'This first I rede thee: be blameless to thy kindred. Take no vengeance even though they do thee wrong. (Old Norse. Sigrdrifumal, 22).

'Is it only the sons of Atreus who love their wives? For every good man who is right minded, loves and cherishes his own.' (Greek. Homer, *Iliad* ix. 340).

'The union and fellowship of men will be best preserved if each receives from us the more kindness in proportion as he is more closely connected with us.' (Roman. Cicero, *De Off.* 1. xvi).

'Part of us is claimed by our country, part by our parents, part by our friends.' (Roman. Ibid 1. vii).

'If a ruler...compassed the salvation of the whole state, surely you would call him good? The Master said, it would no longer be a matter of 'good'. He would without doubt be a divine sage.' (Ancient Chinese. Analects, vii. 28).

'Has it escaped you that in the eyes of gods and good men, your native land deserves from you more honour, worship and reverence than your mother and father and all your ancestors? That you should give a softer answer to its anger than to a father's anger? That if you cannot persuade it to alter its mind you must obey it in all quietness, whether it binds you or beats you or sends you to a war where you might get the wounds of death?' (Greek. Plato, *Crito*, 51. A, B).

'If any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith.' (Christian. 1 Tim. 5:8).

'Put them in mind to obey magistrates.'... 'I exhort that prayers be made for kings and all that are in authority.' (Christian. Titus 3:1, and 1 Tim. 2:1,2).

3.) Duties to Parents, Elders, Ancestors: 'Your father is an image of the Lord of Creation, your mother is an image of the earth. For him who fails to honour them, every work of piety is in vain. This is the first duty.' (Hindu. Janet i. 9).

'Has he despised father and mother? (Babylonian. List of sins ERE v.446).

'I was a staff at my father's side... I went in and out at his command.' (Ancient Egyptian. Confession of the Righteous Soul. ERE v. 481).

'Honour thy father and thy mother.' (Ancient Jewish. Exodus 20:12).

'To care for parents.' (Greek. List of duties in Epictetus 111. vii).

'Children, old men, the poor, and the sick, should be considered as the lords of the atmosphere.' (Hindu. Janet, i. 8).

'Rise up before the hoary head and honour the old man.' (Ancient Jewish. Leviticus 19:32).

'I tended the old man. I gave him my staff.' (Ancient Egyptian. ERE v. 481).

'You will see them take care...of old men.' (Redskin. Le Jeune, quoted ERE v. 437).

'I have not taken away oblations of the blessed dead.' (Ancient Egyptian, Confessions of a Righteous Soul. ERE v. 478).

'When proper respect towards the dead is shown at the end and continued after they are far away, the moral force (te) of a people has reached its highest point.' (Ancient Chinese. Analects, i. 9).

4.) Duties to children and posterity: 'Children, the old, the poor etc. should be considered as lords of the atmosphere.' (Hindu. Janet, i. 8).

'To marry and beget children.' (Greek. List of duties, Epictetus, 111. vii).

'Can you conceive of an Epicurian commonwealth?...What will happen? Whence is the population to be kept up? Who will educate them? Who will be director of adolescents? Who will be director of physical training? What will be taught? (Greek. Ibid.).

'Nature produces a special love of offspring' and, 'to live according to Nature is the supreme good.' (Roman. Cicero, *De off.* 1. iv, and *De Legibus,* 1. xxi).

'The second of these achievements is no less glorious than the first; for while the first did good on one occasion, the second will continue to benefit the state forever.' (Roman. Cicero, *De Off.* 1. xxii).

'Great reverence is owed to a child.' (Roman. Juvenal. xiv. 47).

'The Master said, respect the young.' (Ancient Chinese. Anelects ix. 22).

'The killing of the women, and more especially of the young boys and girls who are to make up the future strength f the people is the saddest part...and we feel it very sorely.' (Redskin. Account of the battle of Wounded Knee. ERE v. 432).

5.) The Law of Justice: 'Has he approached his neighbour's wife?' (Babylonian. List of Sins, ERE v. 446).

'Thou shalt not commit adultery.' (Ancient Jewish. Exodus 20:14).

'I saw in Nastrond (i.e. Hell)...beguilers of other's wives. (Old Norse, Volospa 38, 39).

'Has he drawn false boundaries?' (Babylonian. List of Sins, ERE v. 446).

'To wrong, to rob, to cause to be robbed.' (Babylonian, Ibid).

'I have not stolen.' (Ancient Egyptian. Confession of the Righteous Soul, ERE v. 478).

'Thou shalt not steal.' (Ancient Jewish. Exodus 20:15).

'Choose loss rather than shameful gains.' (Greek. Chilon FR. 10 Diels).

'Justice is the settled and permanent intention of rendering to each man his rights.' (Roman. Justinian, *Institutions,*1. i.).

'If the native make a 'find' of any kind (e.g. a honey tree) and marked it, it was thereafter safe for him, as far as his own tribesmen were concerned, no matter how long he left it.' (Australian Aborigines ERE v. 441).

'The first point of justice is that none should do any mischief to another unless he has first been attacked by the other's wrongdoing. The second is that a man should treat common property as common property, and private property as his own. There is no such thing as private property by nature, but things have become private either through prior occupation (as when men of old came into empty territory) or by conquest, or law, or agreement, or stipulation, or casting lots.' (Roman. Cicero, *De Off.* 1.vii).

' Whoso takes no bribe...well pleasing is this to Samas.' (Babylonian. ERE v. 445).

'I have not traduced the slave to him who is set over him.' (Ancient Egyptian. Confession of the Righteous Soul ERE v. 478).

'Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.' (Ancient Jewish. Exodus 20:16).

'Regard him whom thou knowest like him whom thou knowest not.' (Ancient Egyptian. ERE v. 482).

'Do no unrighteousness in judgement. You must not consider the fact that one party is poor nor the fact that the other is a great man.' (Ancient Jewish. Leviticus. 19:15).

5.) The Law of Good Faith and Veracity: 'A sacrifice is obliterated by a lie and the merit of alms by an act of fraud.' (Hindu. Janet, 1. 6).

'Whose mouth, full of lying, avails not before thee: thou burneth their utterance.' (Babylonian. Hymn to Samas. ERE v. 445).

'With his mouth, he is full of *yea,* in his heart full of *nay?* (Babylonian ERE v. 446).

'I have not spoken falsehood.' (Ancient Egyptian. Confessions of the Righteous Soul. ERE v. 478).

'I sought no trickery, nor swore false oaths.' (Anglo Saxon. Beowulf, 2738).

'The Master said, be of unwavering good faith.' (Ancient Chinese. Analects, viii. 13).

'In Nastrond (i.e. Hell), I saw perjurers.' (Old Norse. Volospa 39).

'Hateful to me as the gates of Hades is that man who says one thing and hides another in his heart.' (Greek. Homer *Iliad, ix 312).*

'The foundation of justice is good faith.' (Roman. Cicerio, *De Off.* 1. vii).

'(The gentleman) must learn to be faithful to his superiors and to keep promises.' (Ancient Chinese. Analects., 1. 8).

'Anything is better than treachery.' (Old Norse. Havamal 124).

7.) The Law of Mercy: 'The poor and the sick should be regarded as the lords of the atmosphere.' (Hindu. Janet, i. 8).

'Whoso maketh intercession for the weak, well pleasing is this to Samas.' (Babylonian ERE v. 445).

'Has he failed to set a prisoner free? (Babylonian. List of Sins. ERE v. 446).

'I have given bread to the hungry, water to the thirsty, clothes to the naked, a ferry boat to the boatless.' (Ancient Egyptian. ERE v. 478).

'One should never strike a woman, not even with a flower.' (Hindu. Janet 1. 8).

'There, Thor, You got disgrace when you beat women.' (Old Norse. *Harbarthsljoth* 38).

'In the Dalebura tribe, a woman, a cripple from birth, was carried about by the tribes-people in turn until her death at the age of sixty-six...They never desert the sick.' (Australian Aborigines. ERE v. 443).

'You will see them take care of...widows, orphans and old men, never reproaching them.' (Redskin. ERE v. 439).

'Nature confesses that she has given to the human race the tenderest hearts, by giving us the power to weep. This is the best part of us.' (Roman. Juvenal, xv. 131).

'They said that he had been the mildest and gentlest of the kings of the world.' (Anglo Saxon. Praise of the hero Beowulf, 3180).

'When thou cuttest down thine harvest...and hath forgotten a sheaf...thou shalt not go again to fetch it; it shall be for a stranger, for the fatherless and for the widow.' (Ancient Jewish. Deut. 24:19).

The Law of Magnanimity: 'There are two kinds of injustice: the first is found in those who do an injury, the second in those who fail to protect another from injury when they can.' (Roman. Cicero, *De Off.* 1. vii).

'Men always knew that when force and injury was offered they might be defenders of themselves; they knew that howsoever men may seek their own commodity, yet if this were done with injury unto others it was not to be suffered, but by all men and by all good means, withstood.' English. Hooker, Laws of Eccl. Polity, 1. ix. 4).

'To take no notice of a violent attack is to strengthen the heart of the enemy. Vigour is valiant, but cowardice is vile.' (Ancient Egyptian. The Pharaoh Senusert 111. cit. H. R. Hall, *Ancient history of the Near East, 161).*

*'*They came to the fields of joy, the fresh turf of the Fortunate Woods and the dwellings of the Blessed...here was the company of those who had suffered wounds fighting for the fatherland.' (Roman. Virgil, *Aeneid.* vi. 638-9, 660).

'Courage has got to be harder, heart the stouter, spirit the sterner, as our strength weakens. Here lies our lord, cut to pieces, our best man in the dust. If anyone thinks of leaving this battle, he can howl forever.' (Anglo Saxon. *Maldon* 312).

'Praise and imitate the man to whom, while life is pleasing, death is not grevious.' (Stoic. Seneca, Ep. Liv).

'The Master said, Love learning and if attacked be ready to die the good way.' (Ancient Chinese, Analects viii. 13).

'Death is to be chosen before slavery and base deeds.' (Roman. Cicero, *De Off,* 1. xxiii).

'Death is better for every man than life with shame.' (Anglo Saxon, Beowulf, 2890).

'Nature and reason demand that nothing uncomely, nothing effeminate, nothing lascivious be done or thought.' (Roman. Cicero, *De Off. 1.* iv).

'We must not listen to those who advise us 'being men to think human thoughts, and being mortal to think mortal thoughts,' but must put on immortality as much as it is possible and strain every nerve to live according to the best part of us, which, being small in bulk, yet much more in its power and honour surpasses all else.' (Ancient Greek. Aristotle, *Eth, Nic.* 1177 b).

'The soul then ought to conduct the body and the spirit of our minds the soul. This is therefore the first law, whereby the highest power of the mind requireth obedience at the hands of all the rest.' (Hooker op. cit. 1. viii).

'Let him not desire to die, let him not desire to live, let him wait for his time...Let him patiently bear hard words, entirely abstaining from bodily pleasures.' (Ancient Indian. Laws of Manu. ERE ii. 98).

'He who is unmoved, who has restrained his senses...is said to be devoted. As a flame in a windless place that flickers not, so is the devoted.' (Ancient Indian. *Bhagvadgita* ERE ii. 90).

'Is not the love of wisdom a practice of death?' (Ancient Greek. Plato, *Phaedo,* 81. A).

'I know that I hung on the gallows for nine nights, wounded with the spear as the sacrifice to Odin, myself offered to myself.' (Old Norse. *Havamal,* 1. 10 in *Corpus Poeticum Boreale;* stanza 139 in Hildebrand's *Lieder der Alteren Edda.* 1922).

'Verily , verily I say unto you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone, but if it dies it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it.' (Christian. John 12:24, 25).

APPENDIX NO 2

The example that I have selected at random for this appendix in order to illustrate the impact that post-modern epistemology is having upon evangelical thinking, is, I believe, clearly seen in the following article. Stephen Pierce a Baptist minister wrote the following article for the Baptist denominational magazine, *Baptists Today*, September 2002, p.6. The article is entitled, *Baptist Leadership in a New Millennium.*

I read with much interest the article by Clive Jacobs about overcoming difficult church matters through the power of the risen Christ, and I was amazed at the insight Clive has into a fundamental issue in Baptist life. Clive calls it 'a spirit of control' that comes from a compelling need for power and people's need to assert their rights.

A team without a captain, a highway without a traffic cop, a school without a principal - the result would be chaos! The same is true for the Church, although leadership is much more complicated for us as Baptists. We have strongly asserted our principle of 'congregational government' and in the past we have sought to govern everything in Church life.

The joke on the Internet has a ring of truth...'How many Baptists does it take to change a light bulb?' 'Answer - 10!' One to change the bulb, 5 to form a committee, and four to make potato salad.

But times are changing, and so is 'Baptist life'.

For the past ten years or so, the key phrase we heard was 'generational change'. We became familiar with catchwords - 'baby boomers', 'baby busters' and 'generation x'.

Alarm bells rang, and the gloves came off when the music of the new generation began to replace the hymns. Hymn books were replaced with song books, which were replaced with video projectors. With all the changes that have taken place, there has, I think, been a fundamental change that has been overlooked - that the president addressed briefly in the December 2001 issue of Baptists Today. There has been a fundamental change in Baptist leadership.

Baptist leaders, especially those in pastoral positions are the key. They are the ones fighting what Clive called 'The Spirit of Control'. The statistics are despairing, of men and women who 'throw in the towel' and give up the fight. Not only in South Africa, but all over the world. The average tenure of a Baptist pastor in a church in South Africa is approximately three years. In the USA it is 9 months! The principle issue causing pastors to terminate is the issue of leadership and control.

So what's up?

It's my understanding (and the subject of my doctoral work) that Baptist leadership is subtly reacting to a phenomenon known as 'post-modernism' - a shifting attitudinal change that is basic to everything we believe. The reaction to the escalating change is, I believe, a desperate attempt to keep things 'the way they always have been' - but its a losing battle. Churches bemoan the fact that they are shutting down, they have no youth, no young marrieds', no evening service, and they are in 'survival mode'.

Lets have a brief and somewhat simplistic look at an approaching phenomenon that in fact defies description. And it's here that you must start. Post-modernism is emerging and incomplete. There are some things happening that we can hold on to, but mostly we are like the pinball in the old pinball machines (this will date me!). We just bounce off what is happening around us!

As I have tried to grasp the mind-set of the post-modern person, the first thing I have discovered is that they come to the Church for the EXPERIENCE. There is little or no interest in denominational loyalties. Post-modern people want an 'inner truth'. They are not asking 'What is the meaning of my life?' but rather, 'Does my life have meaning?' They don't care if the church is Baptist, Pentecostal or Mormon for that matter. They are not interested in whether the pastor is reformed or charismatic, or any other distinction we consider to be important. What DOES matter is that this is the church in my neighbourhood, and the person in the pulpit teaching the Word of God is a person with whom I have a relationship.

Listen pastors! See some red lights flashing here! Post-modern people are not interested who is in control, they are not loyal to denominations, they are loyal to 'friendships'. They are seeking experience and if we want to reach them, we have to be smart. Not 'godless smart' just smart enough to understand their thinking (Discerning!).

Have you noticed the increasing tendency to remove the denominational name from church bulletin boards in favour of 'The Community Church', or a Biblical metaphor - The Family Church. It's a post-modern pointer!

Clive is right, its not about who is in control, any longer, its about PEOPLE being released into ministry. So what is it that we should be doing as leaders to deal with the exponential rate of change that is hitting our churches?

Here's what you can do...

Make sure you are a relational pastor who gives time for people. Visit, visit, visit, visit, visit. We have a planned visitation programme. Become involved in the community, be interested in what the community does. Make sure that your home is open for people to call in. Encourage people that their life does have meaning. Make sure that you as a preacher do your part in making every

service a 'worshipful experience' by not compromising the truth, but by helping your hearers apply the truth in their lives. Develop a sense of 'subjective well-being' by people about their lives and the life of the Church. 'It is well with my soul, and the 'soul' of my Church!'