Human Love and Divine Love: The Platonic Matrix in C.S. Lewis

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HUMAN LOVE AND DIVINE LOVE:
THE PLATONIC MATRIX IN C. S. LEWIS

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A comparison of the writings of Plato and C. S. Lewis reveals a common idea that human love is not sufficient for man. An examination of Plato's Symposium and Lewis's Till We Have Faces and The Four Loves, in particular, shows that both writers illustrate that man must ascend the ladder of love in order to meet the source of all love: Divine Love. Concerned with man's innate needs and ethics, both Plato and Lewis argue that there is a universal principle of goodness known to all men of all cultures. Lewis argues, especially in The Abolition of Man, that man must cling to the traditional notion that a sense of right and wrong is inherent in all men. Illustrated in the measurably modified version of the Cupid and Psyche myth retold in Till We Have Faces, Lewis reveals that man's natural relationships cannot satisfy his yearning for the union with beauty and truth found only in a supernatural relationship with Divine Love: God. Similar to Plato's thought recorded in his dialogues, Lewis projects in most of his writings the argument that man cannot find the good life
until he seeks the virtuous life that leads to harmony with men and joy found in the presence of God.
INTRODUCTION

From even a casual reading of C. S. Lewis's writing, one will discover a definitely designed scheme which enlightens man on his need for love—Human and Divine. Personally disturbed by the ache of loneliness and desire, strangely present but invisible to him, Lewis describes his journey toward the attainment of satisfaction in his soul. Likewise, Plato, in his writings—most notably the Symposium—describes the innate need for unity with another and the struggle in finding that perfect harmony found only in the Form of the Good. In this investigation one discovers the striking resemblance between Lewis's thought and Plato's—particularly on their ideas on man's common knowledge of the Good, man's different love relationships based on innate need, and the manifestations of Divine Love and the results of man's response to it.

What surfaces first is the similarity of Lewis's and Plato's writings in their use of myth. Using the method of myth to unveil a hidden meaning, and grappling with the effort to conquer the mysteries of life, both Plato and Lewis ponder man's questioning of the origin and significance of man and the universe. In Plato's Symposium and particularly in Lewis's Till We Have Faces, one encounters the notion that man must journey toward the understanding of life and himself. Indicating
that man inherently possesses a glimpse of the truth--derived from the one creator of all things, the Good or God--Lewis encourages that man, through love, can rise from the abyss of fear and ignorance to the peak of joy and truth. As Plato in the Republic, illustrates man's shadowy existence and his inability to see the truth, Lewis reveals in Till We Have Faces the miserable, incomplete life for one who fails to recognize the existence of Divine Love, the source of all happiness.

Focusing on man's innate sense of right and wrong, Lewis, like Plato, claims that there is one supreme law of goodness which is known subconsciously to all men in the world. In a world where men delude themselves and others with their own system of laws, Lewis suggests, like Plato, that men should abandon the awareness of the physical world and look to that world intelligible to those who really desire the virtuous life. Paying frequent tribute to Plato who has influenced the world of men for thousands of years, Lewis particularly hails him as one who knew how man could have the just life.

Like Socrates in the Symposium, Plato maintains that man can overcome the needs of the flesh and succumb to the powers of intellectual and spiritual love given to man by the source of all loves, Divine Love. Likewise, Lewis follows this notion and expands it to a dimension that encompasses the gifts bestowed on those who rise to meet God. Especially concerned with revealing the holiness and goodness of God, Lewis expands the image of the Good--God--and makes Him a reality that enables man to feel His Presence.
Having wrestled with intellectual defiance and spiritual desire for many years as an atheist, C. S. Lewis knew the baffling situation of a man who feared to risk his love with others; however, with an illuminating spiritual experience, described in *Surprised by Joy*, he was liberated from the chains of self and surrendered to the authority of God's will. Awakened to the power of God's love, C. S. Lewis embarked on a crusade to enlighten the minds of men who, like Plato's cave men, lived in the shadows of real life, or lived a deplorable life of distrust and disdain for both fellow human beings and God.

In examining the writings and the life of C. S. Lewis, one sees that he, like Plato, possessed the secret for finding the good life—a virtuous life of harmony among men and a blessed life of beauty and joy in the presence of God. In this study of these two thinkers, one realizes that both reflect the prayer that St. Augustine prayed before writing his *Confessions*: "Oh, God, Thou hast made us for Thyself and our hearts are restless till they rest in thee."¹ For man human love is not enough; only Divine Love satisfies.

¹St. Augustine *Confessssions* 1. 1.
CHAPTER ONE

THE PLATONIC NOTIONS IN C. S. LEWIS

In examining the writing of C. S. Lewis, one discovers an overt effort to reveal the relationships between men and the relationship between man and God. Like Plato, Lewis maintains that love is the communicating vehicle that transports man on a journey to seek knowledge of the universal truths of life. Illustrated through myth in Plato's Symposium and Lewis's Till We Have Faces, both writers depict love as an innate need in man, a longing for wholeness or unity with something other than self. Through the creative force of love, which stems from the one Form, Universal Love, man can ascend the ladder of human relationships, namely, Affection, Friendship, and Eros, and ultimately reach the highest love--Divine Love. In order to establish the fundamental principles pertinent to both Plato and Lewis, it is necessary to explicate the ideas on human love and Divine Love in the writings of both.

In the inquiry into the nature of Love, Eros, Plato, in his dialogue the Symposium, illustrates that man's love for another object, the Beloved, is fundamentally based on need or a state of incompleteness. In Aristophanes' myth he states:
And so all this to-do is a relic of that original state of ours, when we were whole, and now, when we are longing for and following after that primeval wholeness, we say we are in love. For there was a time, I repeat, when we were one, but now, for our sins, God has scattered us abroad, as the Spartans scattered the Arcadians.¹

Thus, it is this "spirit," named by Diotima, that drives man toward the completion or perfection of self. Because this spirit stems from Resource and Need, Love will have properties of both.² Consequently, on the lowest level of a love relationship, man will strive to create or achieve through his need.

In The Philosophy of Plato, Raphael Demos says:

How, then can we have enduring possession of achievement? By procreation, whether bodily or psychical. The soul saves itself from death by exteriorizing in some objective work. "Eros" leads to creation; for creation is the endeavor of life to persist beyond its own perishing . . . . The instinct of procreation is a variation upon the instinct for self-maintenance; and the sexual impulse is ultimately the "eros" of immortality.³

Accepting Demo's theory that this "eros" is, in part, a yearning for self-perpetuation beyond this world or realm, one can readily acknowledge that even the lowest level of love, erotic love, is a step toward a higher love in the hierarchy of knowledge of Divine Love. Moreover, this step is toward a better state, according to Socrates' teacher Diotima:

I know it has been suggested, she continued,

¹Plato Symposium 193 A.
²Ibid., 203 B.
that lovers are people who are looking for their other halves, but as I see it, Socrates, Love never longs for either the half or the whole of anything except the good.  

Consequently, it seems that Plato believed that love could lead men toward the good. According to R. A. Markus, the dominant theme of the Symposium is "that love is the universal principle of everybody's and everything's activity." If this notion is true, then it would seem that everybody is seeking the good, and, according to Diotima, "it follows that we are bound to long for immortality as well as for the good--which is to say that Love is a longing for immortality." Again, Plato indicates that this desire for immortality is another step toward the union with the changeless Idea of Love, or Beauty, or the Truth.

From an awareness of the love of the body, to that of the mind, to the self-acknowledged love of Beauty itself, man climbs the ladder of the particulars to the universals. Demos maintains that "the vision of ideal beauty constitutes Plato's religion" and that "it is a mystery into which man is initiated and whereby he achieves the blessed life." Certainly, Diotima's

4Plato Symposium 205 E.


6Plato Symposium 207 A.

7Demos, The Philosophy of Plato, p. 252.
account of this vision indicates such a mystical experience:

Whoever has been initiated so far in the mysteries of Love and has viewed all these aspects of the beautiful in due succession is at last drawing near the final revelation. And now, Socrates, there bursts upon him that wondrous vision which is the very soul of the beauty he has toiled so long for. It is an everlasting loveliness which neither comes nor goes, which neither flowers nor fades, for such beauty is the same on every hand, the same then as now, here as there, this way as that, the same to every worshipper as it is to every other.

Nor will his vision of the beautiful take the form of a face, or of hands, or of anything that is of the flesh. It will be neither words, nor knowledge, nor a something that exists in something else, such as a living creature, or the earth, or the heavens, or anything that is—but subsisting of itself and by itself in an eternal oneness, while every lovely thing partakes of it in such sort that, however much the parts may wax and wane, it will be neither more nor less, but still the same inviolable whole.

And so, when his prescribed devotion to boyish beauties has carried our candidate so far that the universal dawns upon his inward sight, he is almost within reach of the final revelation. And this is the way, the only way, he must approach, or be led toward, the sanctuary of Love. Starting from individual beauties, the quest for the universal beauty must find him ever mounting the heavenly ladder, stepping from rung to rung—that is, from one to two, and from two to every lovely body, from bodily beauty to the beauty of institutions, from institutions to learning and from learning in general to the special lore that pertains to nothing but the beautiful itself—until at last he comes to know what beauty is. ⁸

Such words as "everlasting loveliness," "eternal oneness," and "inviolable whole" indicate what appears to be a holy description of God—at least Plato's God. Thus, it seems that man must learn of the perfection or unity of Beauty, Love, and Justice—virtues—from the model of perfection, God. Since man would be receiving, God would be giving; consequently, God bestows the gift of love, from the lowest to the highest "rung,"

⁸Plato Symposium 211 A-C.
upon man. Similarly, the love that Plato describes in the *Phaedrus* could be labelled "Gift" love.\(^9\) Furthermore, in the *Phaedo*, Socrates admonishes his listeners to remember that man must not usurp the power of the gods who gave him life:

> The allegory which the mystics tell us—that we men are put in a sort of guard post, from which one must not realise oneself or run away—seems to be a high doctrine with difficult implications. All the same, Cebes, I believe that this much is true, that the gods are our keepers, and we men are one of their possessions.\(^{10}\)

Speaking of the highest love, or love that originates in power, Demos claims that Plato's God, being perfect, "bears a grudge to no one" and "can sustain a relation to others."\(^{11}\) Therefore, Divine Love, the highest love, is not dependent on the object loved: God lacks nothing; He is perfect. However, indicative of His goodness, Plato's God occasionally makes "divine intervention," according to Demos, in order to save the world from utter degradation.\(^{12}\) Yet Demos points out that Plato's God is not omnipotent or infinite, like the Christian's concept of God. Although Plato's God is an actuality and a symbol of righteousness, Demos argues that there is an inconsistency concerning the presence of an evil god existing.

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\(^9\)Plato *Phaedrus* 246 E.

\(^{10}\)Plato *Phaedo* 62 B.

\(^{11}\)Demos, *The Philosophy of Plato*, p. 42.

\(^{12}\)Ibid., p. 108.
simultaneously with the absolute omnipotence of God.\textsuperscript{13} Nevertheless, in a later dialogue, the \textit{Timaeus}, Plato refers to God as "the best of all causes" and declares that "all things should be good and nothing bad, so far as this was attainable."\textsuperscript{14}

Plato's idea of God was that He was the Good and propagated goodness in the world of man. Thus, for Plato, God was Divine Love, a supernatural spirit, that provided "the eternal oneness" man needed in order to create harmony or perfection in his human relationships. Searching for the ideal human relationship, man finds in friendship a spirit of unity that stems from shared interests, experiences, or ideas. In instances such as the relationship between Socrates and Alcibiades, described in the \textit{Symposium}, man can climb the ladder of love and discover a higher love that is divorced from the passion of the flesh. Called Platonic love today, this intellectual communion leads one nearer to understanding the invisible principle of Divine Love.

F. M. Cornford, in his essay "The Doctrine of Eros in Plato's \textit{Symposium}," notes that the seeker of beauty would become a god. Describing the highest realm--beyond the physical, the moral, and the intellectual--Cornford states:

As in the \textit{Republic}, the union of the soul with Beauty is called a marriage--the sacred marriage of the Eleusinis--of which the offspring are, not phantoms like those images of goodness that first inspired love of the beautiful person, but true virtue, the virtue which is wisdom. For Plato believed that the goal of philosophy was that man should become a god, knowing

\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., p. 99.

\textsuperscript{14}Plato \textit{Timaeus} 30 A.
good from evil with such clearness and certainty as could not fail to determine the will infallibly.\textsuperscript{15}

Acquisition of the knowledge of good and evil, in Plato, parallels the notion that man should imitate the example of Christ—God who became man—who tried to lead man to goodness and the virtuous life. As stated by Diotima, the knowledge of the highest virtue makes possible man's eternal existence:

And when he has brought forth and reared this perfect virtue, he shall be called the friend of god, and if it is given to man to put on immortality, it shall be given to him.\textsuperscript{16}

Plato's described confrontation with Divine Love parallels the Christian's meeting with God on judgment day. In order to enter the intelligible world beyond this world, Plato's man must possess temperance, courage, wisdom, and justice; these virtues stem from the "eternal oneness," Divine Love. With the allegory of the cave Plato illustrates that man must face his limitations and, in the mythic sense, sprout wings that will enable him to rise toward the light of Truth.\textsuperscript{17}

Meanwhile, it is love which enables man to journey toward reality; through the gift of Divine Love, man can experience the best that there is in this world as he seeks to discover the ideal love. In the voice of Socrates, Plato declares his faith in Love:


\textsuperscript{16}Plato Symposium 212 A.

\textsuperscript{17}Plato Republic 7. 517 C.
I was convinced, and in that conviction I try to bring others to the same creed, and to convince them that, if we are to make this gift our own, Love will help our mortal nature more than all the world. And this is why I say that every man of us should worship the god of love, and this is why I cultivate and worship all the elements of Love, myself, and bid the others do the same. And all my life I shall pay the power and the might of Love such homage as I can.¹⁸

Also persuaded that Divine Love will improve man's nature, C. S. Lewis agrees with Plato that man must climb the ladder of love. In The Allegory of Love, he comments on this hierarchy constructed by Plato:

In the Symposium, no doubt, we find the conception of a ladder whereby the soul may ascend from human love to divine. But this is a ladder in the strictest sense; you reach the higher rungs by leaving the lower ones behind. The original object of human love—who, incidentally, is not a woman, has simply fallen out of sight before the soul arrives at the spiritual object. The very first step upwards would have made a courtly lover blush, since it consists in passing on from the worship of the beloved's beauty to that of the same beauty in others. Those who call themselves Platonists at the Renaissance may imagine a love which reaches the divine without abandoning the human and becomes spiritual while remaining also carnal; but they do not find this in Plato.¹⁹

Recognizing and accepting Plato's principles related to love, C. S. Lewis employs these notions in many of his own works. Certainly, Lewis was a Platonist who adapted some classical concepts to twentieth-century conditions. More importantly, Lewis employs some of Plato's methods and notions in his writings that illustrate Christian principles.

Like Plato, Lewis occasionally uses myth to explain the

¹⁸Plato Symposium 212 B.

nature of man and his universe. In his chapter "On Myth" in An Experiment in Criticism, Lewis notes that myth often reveals an awesome experience with the supernatural that communicates a "great moment" to man. In Till We Have Faces, Lewis reconstructs a love myth which veils many meanings. For example, according to Clyde Kilby in The Christian World of C. S. Lewis, Lewis erects a novel analogous to the pagan society's fertility goddess, Ungit, who in the novel, "seems to have no face and yet has a thousand faces, including a hidden face." Concerned with illuminating man's path to understanding the Divine and human loves, Lewis delineates man's desire for love and beauty and his innate selfish motives which can destroy himself and others. In The Image of Man in C. S. Lewis, William Luther White claims that Lewis proves that "one cannot love a fellow human being rightly until he loves God since it is impossible for humans, all on their own, to make each other happy for long."

In Till We Have Faces, a measurably modified version of the Cupid and Psyche myth, Lewis incorporates the Platonic notions of need love, mystical union with the supernatural, and the final vision of Divine Love. Having no physical

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beauty herself, Orual longs for the beauty bestowed on her half-sister Psyche, and she seeks selfishly to possess what she needs. Refusing to believe Psyche's supernatural relationship with the god, and not accepting on faith the glimpses of the divine, Orual severs her relationship with Psyche. After an anguished life of isolation and loneliness, Orual finally sees in a vision of truth, according to White, that "divine reality seems better discovered through obedience than through testing." 23

As in Plato's myth, it is in the cave among the shadows of men--ghosts--that Orual discovers the Truth. Realizing that her selfish love and denial of the gods have been wrong, she admits:

We're all limbs and parts of one Whole. Hence, of each other. Men, and gods, flow in and out and mingle. 24

Reminiscent of Plato, these crucial words embody the core of the story: man is but a segment, a part of the Perfect Love, God. If man is to learn to love unselfishly, he must first love God. In the Platonic echo, Lewis claims that man begins his climb up the ladder of love when he loves and admires "anything outside" self which is "one step away from utter spiritual ruin." 25

23 Ibid., p. 162.


Of paramount importance is the title of this story. Till We Have Faces indicates that man cannot experience a relationship with the Divine until he can recognize and share his love with others first. Moreover, until man can accept his limitations and the power of the divine, he must endure an ugly, miserable existence. Like Orual, with her masked face and fear of mirrors, man cannot see the real self. Also, the veiled life cannot recognize the presence of the Divine. Orual does not realize, as Kilby points out, that Psyche is a symbol of divine love that labors to secure beauty for Orual and does "for Orual what Orual could never do for herself."26 Until she is reunited with Psyche, Orual has no peace or joy, the results of man's relationship with Divine Love. In the moment of reunion, Orual says: "Joy silenced me. And I thought I had now come to the highest, and to the utmost fullness of being which the human soul can contain."27

In his pursuit of knowledge, C. S. Lewis personally experienced this inscrutable longing—what he calls Sehnsucht—that appeared to him in his early youth.28 Realizing that this desire, Joy, is not a substitute for sex, he proposes that all pleasures are derived from this supreme Joy. After

27Lewis, Till We Have Faces, p. 306.
years of ignoring this divine spirit, "Bright Shadow" as he terms it in *Surprised by Joy*, Lewis, like Orual, encountered that innate desire again:

That walk I now remembered. It seemed to me that I had tasted heaven then. If only such a moment could return! But what I never realized was that it had returned— that the remembering of that walk was itself a new experience of just the same kind. True, it was desire, not possession. But then what I had felt on the walk had also been desire, and only possession in so far as that kind of desire is itself desirable, is the fullest possession we can know on earth; or rather, because the very nature of Joy makes nonsense of our common distinction between having and wanting. 29

Thus, having acknowledged the presence of something powerfully beneficent and having finally surrendered to this invisible spirit, Lewis, like Orual, faced Divine Love and became, in his words, "the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England." 30

Like Plato, Lewis asserts that man's innate yearning to unite with something else is the common lot of man. In *The Weight of Glory*, Lewis comments on man's plight:

Apparently, then, our lifelong nostalgia, our longing to be reunited with something in the universe from which we feel cut off, to be on the inside of some door which we have always seen from the outside, is no mere neurotic fancy, but the truest index of our real situation. And to be at last summoned inside would be both glory and honour beyond all our merits and also the healing of that old ache. 31

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29 Ibid., p. 166.

30 Ibid., pp. 228-29.

That old "ache," that inherent need, must be satisfied, or man will encounter alienation, fear, and frustration; accepting the power of Divine Love, man, like Orual, can discover the gifts of His spirit: joy and peace. Echoing the words of Plato, spoken through the voice of Diotima, Lewis describes the amazing power of the Divine:

But now I saw the bright shadow coming out of the book into the real world and resting there, transforming all common things and yet itself unchanged. Or, more accurately, I saw the common things drawn into the bright shadow. Unde hoc mihi? In the depth of my disgraces, in the then invincible ignorance of my intellect, all that was given me without asking, even without consent. 32

Drawn to this magnetic force, Lewis visualized the futility of the glare of doubt that had restricted his intellect and imagination; now he was ready to begin his journey to real understanding of life. At this decisive moment Lewis became transformed in his imagination and intellect. Instead of refuting the presence of a governing power in his life, he sought to grasp each instance of its love and beauty. From the visible beauty of nature, the intellectual and imaginative beauty provided by his beloved Norse tales and Wagnerian music, and the stimulating human relationships found in the beautiful friendship with Charles Williams, J. R. R. Tolkien, and Owen Barfield, Lewis continued to mature in his knowledge and acquisition of beauty and love. However, as White indicates, Lewis had not yet recognized this invisible spirit as the

32Lewis, Surprised by Joy, p. 181.
Christian God. Nevertheless, as Plato advised, Lewis personally ascended the ladder of love described by Plato in the *Symposium.*

Having been awakened to the return of Joy by his reading of George MacDonald's *Phantastes, A Faerie Romance,* as he notes in his spiritual autobiography, Lewis acknowledged personally another Platonic doctrine:

> We mortals, seen as the sciences see us and as we commonly see one another, are mere "appearances." But appearances of the Absolute. . . . And that is why we experience Joy: we yearn, rightly, for that unity which we can never reach except by ceasing to be the separate phenomenal beings called "we." . . . Its visitations were rather the moments of clearest consciousness we had, when we became aware of our fragmentary and phantasmal nature and ached for that impossible reunion which would annihilate us or that self-contradictory waking which would reveal, not that we had had, but that we were, a dream.

More simply stated in Lewis's *The Problem of Pain,* he maintains that "the thing you long for summons you away from the self." According to Lewis, there is nothing but a wasteland for those who cling selfishly to one rung of the ladder--one love--like Orual; moreover, Lewis discerns that in rejecting union with others man must forfeit a life of joy, productivity, and complete love. The responsive chord to Plato rings in Lewis's idea that mere affection becomes twisted unless it is governed by reason and goodness which stem from Divine Love.

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33White, *The Image of Man in C. S. Lewis,* p. 112.


Arguing that the self must be abdicated in order to ascend toward the Good Himself, Lewis echoes Plato's notion that a life of harmony follows the relationships directed by Divine Love:

The golden apple of selfhood, thrown among the false gods, became an apple of discord because they scrambled for it. They did not know the first rule of the holy game, which is that every player must by all means touch the ball and then immediately pass it on. To be found with it in your hands is a fault: to cling to it, death. But when it flies to and fro among the players too swift for eye to follow, and the great master Himself leads the revelry, giving Himself eternally to His creatures in the generation, and back to Himself in the sacrifice, of the Word, then indeed the eternal dance 'makes heaven drowsy with the harmony.'

All pains and pleasure we have known on earth are earthly initiations in the movements of that dance: but the dance itself is strictly incomparable with sufferings of this present time. As we draw nearer to its uncreated rhythm, pain and pleasure sink almost out of sight. There is joy in the dance, but it does not exist for the sake of good, or of love. It is Love Himself, and Good Himself, and therefore happy. It does not exist for us, but we for it.  

In mythical fashion, Lewis makes transparent the unseen bliss that is the reward for those who have lived a selfless life.

In a manner similar to Plato's account of God or the Good, Lewis declares that all things—joy, goodness, love, and the energy of life itself—exist in Love Himself. Furthermore, those selfless persons who merit immortality will discover no pain or suffering in the next world, for only heavenly beauty and goodness will exist in the sanctuary of Divine Love.

It is evident that in his writing C. S. Lewis reflects many of Plato's ideas related to man and God. Concerned

36Ibid., p. 152.
especially with the relationships between men and the relationship between man and God, Lewis adapts Platonic thought to accommodate his Christian worldview to a contemporary society. Indeed, C. S. Lewis was a twentieth century Platonist.
CHAPTER TWO

UNIVERSAL VALUES

Before Lewis totally accepted the Christian God, he acknowledged that there was an invisible principle that instilled a consciousness of right and wrong in all men of all ages and cultures. Maintaining that this principle is an embodiment of the Good, Lewis contends that man has an innate awareness of a particular standard of behavior, a Moral Law that he should follow. Thus, man's sense of fair play descends from the Absolute Good that exists in the whole universe. Moreover, such a universal goodness, determines the values of all people. In his essay "The Law of Human Nature," included in Mere Christianity, Lewis marvels that the moral teachings of the ancient Egyptians, Babylonians, Hindus, Chinese, Greeks, and Romans are strikingly similar to each other and to values subsequently espoused in the history of western civilization.¹

Arguing that this innate code of ethics is not simply man's instinct or group incentive, Lewis maintains that the universal law, called the Law of Human Nature by some, is a

reality. In his radio broadcast entitled "The Reality of the Law"—first published in The Case for Christianity—Lewis says to his audience:

It begins to look as if we shall have to admit that there is more than one kind of reality; that, in this the ordinary facts of men's behavior, and yet quite definitely real—a real law, which none of us made, but which we find pressing on us.  

In trying to define this apparent guide, universal law, Lewis proposes that it is a Being that has consciousness and purpose. Although he fails to actually name this Power, he distinctly recognizes its invisible effects on man. He says:

All I have got to is a Something which is directing the universe, and which appears in me as a law urging me to do right and making me feel responsible and uncomfortable when I do wrong. I think we have to assume it is more like a mind than it is like anything else we know—because after all the only other thing we know is matter and you can hardly imagine a bit of matter giving instructions.

Although he first identifies the Absolute as something which is "like a mind," in Surprised by Joy—published later—Lewis denies this description:

The Absolute Mind—better still, the Absolute—was impersonal, or it knew itself (but not us?) only in us, and it was so absolute that it wasn't really much more like a mind than anything else. . . . We could talk religiously about the Absolute: but there was no danger of Its doing anything about us.

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2 Ibid., p. 30.
3 Ibid., p. 34.
Having established its existence, Lewis determined that it is an impersonal power that naturally leads men toward the righteous life. Moreover, he concludes that if the universe is not under the jurisdiction of an absolute law of goodness, then all efforts at decent behavior are in vain.5

Elaborating further on his theory of ethics in The Abolition of Man, his treatise on morality and universal human values, Lewis argues that man must submit to his goodness within. Referring to the well-bred youth who matures into a man of both heart and head—emotion and reason—Lewis determines that from Plato's Republic "we were told it all long ago."6 According to Lewis, man cannot govern himself and his society without submitting to his innate sense of right and wrong. What ails contemporary society, according to Lewis, is a system governed by men who have no chests—no hearts. In a chapter entitled "Men Without Chests," Lewis says:

It is not excess of thought but defect of fertile and generous emotion that marks them out. Their heads are no bigger than the ordinary: it is the atrophy of the chest beneath that makes them seem so.7

Therefore, he says it is folly to expect honor and a strong sense of values from men who have forsaken their intuitive

5Lewis, Mere Christianity, p. 38.


7Ibid., p. 35.
knowledge of good and evil.

According to Plato, the soul has knowledge of the Absolute Good, the Forms. Likewise, according to Lewis, all men have an innate awareness of a presence or reality that is the guide for the good life. In The Abolition of Man, Lewis suggests that this knowledge of the absolute Law of Human Nature perpetuates the morality of all men of all cultures. He claims:

As Plato said that the Good was 'beyond existence' and Wordsworth that through virtue the stars were strong, so the Indian masters say that the gods themselves are born of the Rta and obey it. 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 the things everlastingly emerge, stilly, and tranquilly, into space and time. It is also the Way which every man should tread in imitation of that cosmic and super-cosmic progression, conforming all activities to that great exemplar.

Stated poetically, these words introduce what Lewis calls the doctrine of objective value; using the Tao as a succinct term for all concepts of values--Platonic, Aristotelian, Stoic, Oriental, Jewish, and Christian. Lewis argues that man must not forsake the one Way or Road in establishing a system of values for his particular society.

Attacking modern education for its so-called progressive manner of changing things--including traditional laws--Lewis maintains that these educators propagate the idea that man should obey his instincts, his own desires, and disregard

8Ibid., pp. 27-28
outdated laws. Outraged, Lewis accuses these persons, whom he calls "Innovators," of being guilty of obliterating that one authoritative "ought" that preserves order in man's life.\textsuperscript{9} Moreover, with what Lewis names the "debunking process," these "Innovators" of human values try to establish new values which they consider "immune from the debunking process."\textsuperscript{10}

Convinced that the scientists' concern for man's future welfare is in fact derived from the \textit{Tao}, Lewis asserts that these men merely fool themselves in arguing that man is motivated toward goodness purely by his instincts. Since all good ideas originate in the idea of the Good, Lewis says that "our duty to do good to all men is an axiom of Practical Reason, and our duty to do good to our descendants is a clear deduction from it."\textsuperscript{11} Therefore, Lewis holds that man's respect for posterity, his sense of duty to his fellowmen--ancestors, parents, children--is part of the one Whole, reminiscent of Plato, the Absolute Good that all men inherently know. Of the origin of value judgments, he contends that "there never has been, and never will be, a radically new judgment of values in the history of the world."\textsuperscript{12} All new ideologies are but new slants of that permanent Law of Human Nature, the \textit{Tao}, which is the only source for man's system of values.

\textsuperscript{9}Ibid., p. 53.
\textsuperscript{10}Ibid., p. 41.
\textsuperscript{11}Ibid., p. 54.
\textsuperscript{12}Ibid., p. 56.
Although the Tao can have modifications in the lives of those who live inside its goodness, according to Lewis, it cannot be changed by those who live outside its power. More specifically in the case of the German philosopher Friederich Nietzsche, with his godless code of ethics which allowed man sovereign will to control his own life, Lewis notes that such an innovative code of ethics cannot work and will not endure. Thus, he concludes that man's values must derive from that one authority, the Law of Human Nature. He states:

I am simply arguing that if we are to have values at all we must accept the ultimate platitudes of Practical Reason as having absolute validity: that any attempt, having become sceptical about these, to reintroduce value lower down on some supposedly more 'realistic' basis, is doomed.\(^{13}\)

Consequently, Lewis concludes that no new laws of morality or universal human laws can be created. It is that one ancient law, noted by Plato, that Lewis urges man to follow. Demos describes Plato's idea of absolute values:

In Plato, we find the first and the most powerful formulation of the doctrine of absolute values. The Good is the goal of all desire; but it is not a goal arbitrarily determined by desire. Values do not change with races, or with times, or with material conditions. The Good is a universal and fixed norm which the individual finds, and to which he must submit.\(^{14}\)

It is this "fixed norm" indicated thousands of years ago by Plato that Lewis urges man to keep permanent in an ever

\(^{13}\)Ibid., p. 61.

changing world—a world dominated by progressive science and relativism.

In the chapter entitled "The Abolition of Man" in the book entitled the same, Lewis makes his attack on science. Claiming that man's desire for conquest of Nature has actually weakened man's control, Lewis argues that "each new power won by man is a power 'over' man as well." The scientific innovators, labelled "Conditioners," Lewis notes, have mastered the flight of man's conscience as well as the airplane, the communication of man's voice as well as the telephone, and the availability of his morality as well as the contraceptive. Having created a synthetic Tao, these men of progressive science have enslaved men to a false set of values or no values at all, according to Lewis. Totally concerned with quantity and not quality, these innovators have subjected man to a loss of his humanity; prompted to desire and purchase everything mechanical and animate, man has lost sight of that animate spirit, the absolute goodness, that makes him realize that he is endowed with goodness in himself. Instead, modern man, says Lewis, is conditioned to think of himself as "raw material for scientific manipulation." Thus, Lewis surmises that the "Conditioners" in their determined and sinister effort to reduce man's individuality dehumanize him and lead him toward spiritual ruin. He says: "I am very doubtful whether history shows us one example of a man who,

15Lewis, The Abolition of Man, p. 71.
16Ibid., p. 84.
having stepped outside traditional morality and attained power, has used that power benevolently."\(^\text{17}\) Certainly, his view of the scientific "Conditioners" does not encompass a world of goodness for modern man. Lewis vows that "if the Universe is not governed by an absolute goodness, then all our efforts are in the long run hopeless."\(^\text{18}\)

It is Lewis' contention, as seen in his essay "The Poison of Subjectivism," published in *Christian Reflections*, that man will not endure if he insists on fabricating his own values for his own separate community. He argues that modern man must reject the popular new ethics that seemingly fit a particular society. Also, he urges man to seek the one permanent idea present in a society that allows too much change in too short a time. Realizing that such rapidity of change bombards man's concept of himself and his retention of values, Lewis encourages man to seize control of his technological achievements. More importantly, Lewis points out that a philosophy of a society "which does not accept value as eternal and objective can lead us only to ruin."\(^\text{19}\)

In a penetrating discussion of man's subjectivity, his so-called logical explanation of good and evil, Lewis claims that this subjectivism has discolored man's vision of value

\(^\text{17}\)Ibid., p. 78.
\(^\text{18}\)Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, p. 38.
judgments. Through his own reasoning, modern man has decided that one's judgments are really, according to Lewis, "sentiments, or complexes, or attitudes, produced in a community by the pressure of its environment and its traditions, and differing from one community to another." Believing that this concept of values is a dangerous notion that will confuse and destroy man in his relationships to others, Lewis determines to erase this thinking by his explanation given in his essay "The Poison of Subjectivism."

By illustrating the stability of the traditional system of values, Lewis points out the incapacity for new systems. He writes:

If a good is a fixed point, it is at least possible that we should get nearer and nearer to it; but if the terminus is as mobile as the train, how can the train progress towards it? Our ideas of the good may change, but they cannot change either for the better or the worse if there is no absolute and immutable good to which they can approximate or from which they can recede. We can go on getting a sum more and more nearly right only if the one perfectly right answer is 'stagnant.'

From this explanation it follows that one cannot select a change of values as he would a change of clothes. One's values must be fixed, says Lewis, if he is to be able to approach that standard he follows. As he states in The Abolition of Man, man cannot create a new system of values. In Lewis's own words "the human mind has no more power of inventing a new value than of imagining a new primary colour, 

20Ibid., p. 73.

21Ibid., p. 76.
or indeed, of creating a new sun and a new sky for it to move in."\(^{22}\)

Although Lewis admits that there are some alterations of the Tao, namely among the Pagan, the Jewish, and the Christian tradition, he finds that the common core of their ethical systems is based on doing good. Again, this notion corresponds to Plato's idea that absolute values originate in the Form of the Good; of course, Lewis's theory of the Tao is based on this same notion. He maintains that "only the Tao provides a common human law of action which can over-arch rulers and ruled alike. A dogmatic belief in objective value is necessary to the very idea of a rule which is not tyranny or an obedience which is not slavery."\(^{23}\) Thus, belief in objective values provides a consistent effort toward keeping man human and, therefore, free to acknowledge good in a world composed of good and evil.

It is objective value that perpetuates the morality and code of conduct for all, according to Lewis. Furthermore, he observes that "all the human beings that history has heard of acknowledge some kind of morality."\(^{24}\) As stated by Richard B. Cunningham, "what Lewis means by the abolition of

\(^{22}\)Lewis, The Abolition of Man, pp. 56-57.

\(^{23}\)Ibid., p. 84.

man is nowhere seen more clearly than in the area of morality, ethics, and values."25 Yet, with the loss of an anchor on Natural Human Law, man drifts away from the virtuous life and drowns in the sea of evil; without answer to the authority, the Tao, man abandons his knowledge of morality and follows immorality.

Following one's own system of values—which often allows immorality—man inevitably discovers discord in his life, according to Lewis in his writing on behavior in Mere Christianity. Analogous to the band player who must keep in tune and rhythm with other members of the band, man must strive to walk in step with his fellowmen says Lewis. Although he realizes that man cannot achieve moral perfection, he holds that he must make the effort to climb up that ladder of perfection since "every moral failure is going to cause trouble, probably to others" and himself.26 Although Lewis is criticized for being a conservatist in his moral view, Peter Kreeft argues that such a claim is not necessarily true since Lewis does not project morality as "an end in itself."27

Vitally interested in the relationships between humans himself, Lewis notes that most persons consider first the

26Lewis, Mere Christianity, p. 70.
social arena when morality is mentioned. He agrees with the general public that "the results of bad morality in that sphere are so obvious ... war and poverty and graft and lies and shoddy work." However, he contends that the social problem stems from the moral consciousness in the individual who fails to recognize the absolute Law of Human Nature. In Miracles, Lewis makes his best statement on man's moral wisdom:

If we are to continue to make moral judgments (and whatever we say we shall in fact continue) then we must believe that the conscience of man is not a product of Nature. It can be valid only if it is an offshoot of some absolute moral wisdom, a moral wisdom which exists absolutely 'on its own' and is not a product of non-moral, non-rational Nature.29

In summary, C. S. Lewis perpetuates the belief in the existence of the Law of Human Nature in many of his philosophical works. Especially disturbed by the modern trends in education and science, Lewis attacks those persons and systems which advance the burial of traditional values. Like Plato, Lewis argues for the notion of a universal goodness in the Tao—the invisible principle of righteousness—that he finds common to all cultures of all time. Maintaining that this innate knowledge of the Good provides the only morality for men, Lewis advocates that man abandon the new codes of ethics—which, he believes, will abolish the race of men—and return

28 Lewis, Mere Christianity, p. 71

to the one universal law created to give man a common sense of right and wrong: Universal Values.
CHAPTER THREE

HUMAN LOVE

In analyzing the development and problems of human relationships, C. S. Lewis explores the strengths and deficiencies of man's basic loves in his widely-read book, The Four Loves, reviewed as a "masterpiece" by Donald G. Bloesch.\(^1\) Describing a hierarchy of loves—originating in Need-love, Gift-love, and Appreciative-love—Lewis claims that man's fundamental relationships are based on three natural loves: Affection, Friendship, and Eros.

Beginning with the most fundamental love, Lewis perceives that Affection is the most instinctive of man's loves. Illustrated by maternal love, Lewis notes that Affection has a dual nature: Gift-love and Need-love. Observing that a mother wants to give love to her young, Lewis asserts that this Affection is a "Gift-love but it needs to be needed."\(^2\) Calling this love the humblest and perhaps the most unconfessed love, Lewis indicates that it is the least pretentious and appears in "homespun clothing."\(^3\) Moreover, he deems it the most universal

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\(^{3}\)Ibid., p. 57.
and tolerant of all man's loves since it "turns a blind eye to faults, revives easily after quarrels" and even loves "the unattractive." 

Pointing out the perversions of Affection, Lewis illustrates that uncontrolled Affection develops into jealousy and intolerance with others because of man's possessive nature. For example, using the instance of the disaster of excessive maternal love, Lewis delineates one domineering Mrs. Fidget who doted on doing all the work for her beloved family; but, by literally living for the individual members of the family, Mrs. Fidget eventually destroyed the good family relationship and killed herself with fatigue. However, in being laid to final rest, Mrs. Fidget allowed her family their first peace and quiet says Lewis good-humoredly. Yet he adds that what was unfortunate was her failure to discipline her need to give love.

In The Problem of Pain Lewis says that "love, by definition, seeks to enjoy its object." However, in The Four Loves, he adamantly advises man to find a substitution for his abundant need to give to the beloved. Since an animal can be manipulated and pampered to any extreme, he suggests that possession of a sub-human object, such as an animal, can aid

4Ibid., pp. 60-61.

in one's curtailing his Gift-love which desires to bestow pleasure on the beloved. Insisting that man cannot live solely by human or sub-human Affection, Lewis contends that man must reach for another relationship—not so easily available or attainable—in the hierarchy of loves: Friendship.

It is Friendship, the second of the natural loves in the Platonic ladder of loves, that affords man a higher and more meaningful relationship beyond Affection according to Lewis. In the chapter "Friendship" in The Four Loves, he acknowledges that "to the Ancients, Friendship seemed the happiest and most fully human of all loves; the crown of life and the school of virtue." Yet, unlike Plato and his friends, modern man does not regard this relationship a necessity, a Need-love. Lewis holds that for some such a relationship today denotes too much individuality or separation from the group; however, he labels this human love relationship "the highest level of individuality." Moreover, he adds that it has become necessary "to rebut the theory that every firm and serious friendship between men or between women is really homosexual."

The ancient taint of homosexuality, prevalent in Plato's society, continues to color the minds of others in every level of society. However, it is interesting that Lewis

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6 Lewis, The Four Loves, p. 87.
7 Ibid., p. 90.
8 Ibid.
notes in his essay on values, "The Poison of Subjectivism," that Plato's comments on the matter illustrate his concern rather than his acceptance:

It is untrue to say that the Greeks thought sexual perversion innocent. The continual tittering of Plato is really more evidential than the stern prohibition of Aristotle. Men titter thus only about what they regard as, at least a peccadillo: the jokes about drunkenness in Pickwick, far from proving that the nineteenth century English thought it innocent, proves the reverse. There is an enormous difference of degree between the Greek view of perversion and the Christian, but there is not opposition.9

In Surprised by Joy Lewis, although never personally interested in pederasty himself, does not condemn his Wyvern classmates who practiced this relationship because he maintains that "pederasty, however great an evil in itself, was, in that time and place, the only foothold or cranny left for certain good things."10 In such a rigid system of school life he says that it was the only answer to the boys' Need-love and declares that "Plato was right after all. Eros turned upside down, blackened, distorted, and filthy, still bore the traces of his divinity."11

Echoing Plato's "Eros" in the Symposium, Lewis calls Friendship a spiritual union that enables man to feel a part of a whole. In The Weight of Glory, Lewis says: "The sense that in this universe we are treated as strangers, the longing to be acknowledged, to meet with some response, to bridge


11Ibid., p. 110.
some chasm that yawns between us and reality, is part of our
inconsolable secret." At least in this earthly world,
Friendship affords man an escape from spiritual isolation.
In an intimate circle of kindred spirits which share common
hopes and dreams, Lewis proposes in The Four Loves, that man
catches a glimpse of Heaven. Of this description of man's
needs and motives for human relationships, Martin D'Arcy dis-
cerns that Lewis's The Four Loves should be "a minor classic." Describing his first adventure with Friendship, Lewis
notes his astonishment in finding someone who shared his
interests. Simultaneously, he marvels that there exists for
man an image of himself in another human being:

Many thousands of people have had the experience of
finding the first friend, and it is none the less a
wonder; as great a wonder (pace the novelists) as first
love, or even a greater. I had been so far from thinking
such a friend possible that I had never even longed for
one; no more than I longed to be King of England. ... Nothing, I suspect, is more astonishing in any man's
life than the discovery that there do exist people very,
very like himself.

What he found in this first Friendship with young Arthur
Greeves he later found in R. K. Hamilton Jenkin, Nevill
Coghill, H. V. D. Dyson, J. R. R. Tolkein, and Owen Barfield
--his dearest friend for more than forty years, according to

12C. S. Lewis, The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses
(New York: Macmillan Co., 1949; reprint ed., Grand Rapids,
Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Eerdmans Evangel-

13Martin D'Arcy, "These Things Called Love," review of
The Four Loves, by C. S. Lewis, in New York Times Book Review,
31 July 1960, sec. 7, p. 4.

Douglas Gilbert and Clyde Kilby. Of Owen Barfield, he said the following:

But the Second Friend is the man who disagrees with you about everything. He is not so much the alter ego as the antiself. Of course he shares your interests; otherwise he would not become your friend at all. But he has approached them all at a different angle. He has read all the right books but he has got the wrong things out of every one. . . . He is as fascinating (and infuriating) as a woman. . . . Actually (though it never seems so at the time) you modify one another's thought; out of this perpetual dogfight a community of mind and a deep affection emerge. 16

Lewis's description of Barfield best typifies what he says of Friendship. Mutuality of mind and spirit create an exclusive relationship—a Friendship which is void of Need-love. According to Lewis, true Friendship stems from Appreciative-love which is ignorant of jealousy, indifferent to status, socially and economically, and divorced from an Affection which has a need to be needed. 17

Disparaging the possibility of real Friendship existing between a man and a woman—mainly because of educational differences—Lewis contends that a woman cares nothing for sharing ideas. Instead, she works to "banish" male camaraderie with her "prattling." 18 Of course, such criticism offends the female reader, but in defense of Lewis, one must remember that

17 Lewis, The Four Loves, p. 102.
18 Ibid., p. 109.
he observed and recorded such probabilities prior to the recent movement for women's liberation. In addition, in his Letters to an American Lady, he clearly demonstrates a profound respect for the mind and spirit of a woman.

In a letter to Owen Barfield, as recorded by Carolyn Keefe in C. S. Lewis Speaker and Teacher, Lewis stated that "there's nothing like a true friend." Then, in his closing description of Friendship in The Four Loves, Lewis argues that God is present in the beauty of a real Friendship:

The Friendship is not a reward for our discrimination and good taste in finding one another out. It is the instrument by which God reveals to each the beauties of all the others. They are no greater than the beauties of a thousand other men; by Friendship God opens our eyes to them. They are, like all beauties, derived from Him, and then, in a good Friendship, increased by Him through the Friendship itself, so that it is His instrument for creating as well as for revealing.

It follows from the evidence of his relationship with Owen Barfield that Lewis intrinsically knew the meaning of Friendship. Moreover, this particular human love led him to his discovery of the beauty of a higher and more complex love: Eros.

In one of his letters C. S. Lewis said: "No one can mark the exact moment at which friendship becomes love." 

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20Lewis, The Four Loves, p. 126.

Yet he observes that the single act of falling in love advances man toward a higher understanding of love and life than any other activity. Quite similar to Plato's account of man's encounter with Love (Eros), Lewis describes the nature of a meeting with Eros:

The event of falling in love is of such a nature that we are right to reject as intolerable the idea that it should be transitory. In one high bound it has overleaped the massive wall of our selfhood; it has made appetite itself altruistic, tossed personal happiness aside as a triviality and planted the interests of another in the centre of our being. Spontaneously and without effort we have fulfilled the law (toward one person) by loving our neighbor as ourselves. It is an image, a foretaste, of what must become to all if Love Himself rules in us without a rival. It is even (well used) a preparation for that.\(^\text{22}\)

Eros, according to Lewis, is the state of "being in love" plus sexuality. Thus, this love is Gift-love coupled with Need-love; however, as William Luther White points out, Eros "transforms a need-pleasure into the most appreciative of pleasures."\(^\text{23}\) Unlike mere sexuality which merely desires the object, Eros desires the beloved. Commenting on the Greeks' worship of the goddess of love Aphrodite, Lewis urges modern man to remember the "laughter-loving" description they applied to man's erotic relationships. Suggesting that man needs to include frivolity in this relationship in order to prohibit the risk of worshipping a false goddess, Lewis argues

\(^{22}\text{Lewis, The Four Loves, p. 158.}\)

that man "must not attempt to find an absolute in the flesh." 24 This notion parallels Aristophanes' myth in Plato's Symposium which illustrates that the love of the flesh is a need but not an end in the pursuit of love itself. As Michael Novak indicates in his review of The Four Loves, Lewis clearly perceives the dilemma of modern man's incapacity to laugh at Eros. 25

George Bailey recollects in his essay "In the University" the memorable comments Lewis made while he was at Oxford. Of particular import was his well-known statement on the Symposium, Plato's treatise on love Lewis said: "To die without having read the Symposium would be ridiculous--it would be like never having bathed in the sea, never having drunk wine, never having been in love." 26 Apparently, influenced by Plato's awareness of the power of man's animal sexuality, a need based on Aristophanes' myth, Lewis admits that his conception of the religion of love, described in The Allegory of Love was wrong. He says:

> Years ago when I wrote about medieval love-poetry and described its strange, half make-believe, "religion of love," I was blind enough to treat this as an almost purely literary phenomenon. I know better now. Eros by his nature invites it. 27

24Lewis, The Four Loves, p. 140.


Lewis claims in *The Four Loves* that there is a religion of love: the lovers' particular language and their vows begin what they think, at the moment, will be a heavenly union on earth. Yet, realistically, he points out that the "grandeur" of love cannot permanently obliterate the self, and the "terror" of love begins with the struggle to keep Eros on the throne of the marriage.  

Although his treatment of conjugal love is rather scant, as the critics complain, Lewis seems hesitant to offend or embarrass. Evidence in George Bailey's essay supports the likely reticence Lewis felt when asked by a BBC interviewer the following:

"As the authority on *The Allegory of Love*, Mr. Lewis, what is your attitude to the detailed, non-allegorical description of the act of love in literature?"  
'To describe the act of love in detail without resorting to allegory,' answered Lewis, 'one is restricted to three choices: the language of the nursery, the language of the gutter, or the language of science—all are equally unsatisfactory.'

Thus, it appears that C. S. Lewis chose not to elaborate on the nature and perversions of Eros as he had on the other natural loves. Instead of not understanding conjugal love, as some critics have claimed, perhaps it is more accurate to say that he did not intend to describe the act of love in his chapter on Eros. What resounds clearly—as good advice—is his conclusion that Eros, like both Affection and Friendship, cannot be sufficient for man. Moreover, Eros cannot exist for man "unless he obeys God."  

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28Ibid., p. 150.  
29Bailey, "In the University," p. 114.  
good and permanent descends from that one perfect love, Lewis urges man to climb higher to meet Divine Love.

In his analysis of the natural loves—their origins, characteristics, values, and even perversions—Lewis reveals that Affection, Friendship, and Eros are necessary human relationships which satisfy Need-loves, Gift-loves, and Appreciative-loves inherent in man. However, like Plato, Lewis maintains that human love is not sufficient. Through a relationship with a higher love—Divine Love—man discovers the source that created all loves: God.
CHAPTER FOUR

DIVINE LOVE

Basic to the writings of C. S. Lewis is his belief that human love is contingent on Divine Love. Maintaining that man cannot find in natural loves the total fulfillment he desires, Lewis holds that man must seek knowledge of that love relationship which gives life to everything else: Divine Love. A redeemed atheist himself, Lewis paints a graphic picture of the nature of Divine Love and the gifts God bestows on those who strive to know Him. With devastating effect, he delineates the inevitable benefits available for those who surrender completely to God's will—a will which leads man to the attainment of real joy in his earthly life and bliss in his heavenly life. Answering many of the contemporary skeptics' questions on the necessity of man's pursuing the virtuous life, the problem of pain and suffering in God's world, and the credibility of Heaven and Hell, Lewis presents a convincing defense of the Christian faith.

In The Four Loves Lewis indicates in the introduction that "the human loves can be glorious images" of God's love—no less and no more. In his last chapter, entitled

"Charity," Lewis suggests that the natural loves cannot reach full maturity unless they are subordinate to Divine Love. With analogy to a garden that yields only weeds unless it is nurtured by sunshine and rain, Lewis claims that man cannot produce vital love relationships unless he is nurtured by the light of God's love. As a garden requires constant tending if it is to be distinct from a wilderness, a man requires communion with God if he is to develop his full potential. What he suggests in this comparison is that man is not sufficient in himself, nor is his human love enough in itself. According to Dr. John T. Stahl, Lewis illustrates that all human loves "partake in Divine Love."  

For most men it is difficult to transcend earthly love according to Lewis. Remark ing on St. Augustine's startling grief from the death of a friend, Lewis notes that in death one occasionally encounters the melancholy truth that man cannot invest his depth of love in the things of this earth. Thus, he admonishes man to establish his human loves as subordinate to God's love. He states: "We must try to relate the human activities called 'loves' to that Love which is God a little more precisely than we have yet done."  

Excessive love of a human being is a rival to Divine Love. In fact, unrestricted love for one's fellow human beings prohibits one's approaching a relationship with God.

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2John T. Stahl, interview held in his home in April, 1975.

Lewis notes that Jesus refers to this problem in Luke 14:26 and orders that His followers must love Him more than any earthly creature. However, Lewis indicates that "it is probably impossible to love any human being simply 'too much.'" Instead, the problem is that man does not love God enough. Yet he notes that man must pray for this ability to know God and to experience a personal relationship with Divine Love.

In describing the nature of Divine Love, Lewis admits that knowledge of Him is apparent only through those persons or things which manifest God's love. In order to clear the cobwebs of confusion in man's mind, Lewis sweeps clean the notion that man can really know (savoir) God. Instead, man must seek to taste of Divine Love which has appeared to man in visions and dreams. He says:

We begin at the real beginning, with love as the Divine Energy. This primal love is Gift-love. In God there is no hunger that needs to be filled, only plenteousness that desires to give. The doctrine that God was under no necessity to create is not a piece of dry scholastic speculation. It is essential.

Since Divine Love is the origin of all loves, according to Lewis, we can know something of the nature of this love through all love relationships--man's love for his animal, his parents, his wife, and his children. Yet, unlike human love, Divine Love is constant.

In *Mere Christianity* Lewis observes that though human

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4Ibid., p. 170.

5Ibid., p. 176
love fluctuates, God's love does not. 6 Man's apathy or absence from Him does not alter His constant love for us; consequently, in a moment of crisis, man rushes to God--usually as a last measure--and discovers a loving, receptive Father figure, who, quite literally, according to Lewis, "stoops to conquer." 7 It is this Divine humility that dissipates toward man--if he encounters a relationship with God. His Divine humility is another gift in the Gift-love that He shares with his seekers. Lewis describes this quality in the following:

The point is, He wants you to know Him; wants to give you Himself. And He and you are two things of such a kind that if you really get into any kind of touch with Him you will, in fact, be humble--delightedly humble, feeling the infinite relief of having for once got rid of all the silly nonsense about your own dignity which has made you restless and unhappy all your life. He is trying to make you humble in order to make this moment possible: trying to take a lot of silly, ugly, fancy-dress in which we have all got ourselves up and are strutting about like the little idiots we are. 8

Lewis regrets that man calls on God most often when he encounters adverse circumstances. He claims that if God were proud He would not generate such lovingness and goodness toward an ungrateful person. Nevertheless, he notes that man expects a kindness akin to that of one's grandfather. Yet he points out that Divine Love encompasses the demanding

the demanding perfection instilled in the potter who is not satisfied with an imperfect vessel. It is Divine Love that surpasses the notion of kindness. In *The Problem of Pain* Lewis states:

> If God is Love, He is, by definition, something more than mere kindness. And it appears, from all the records, that though He has often rebuked us and condemned us, He has never regarded us with contempt. He has paid us the intolerable compliment of loving us in the deepest, most tragic, most inexorable sense.9

Thus, Divine Love becomes the loving intruder in one's life if He detects the need for interruption.

Speaking personally of the interruption Divine Love made in his life, Lewis remarks in *Surprised by Joy* that he had yearned to possess his own being—his own soul. But with "the steady, unrelenting approach of Him whom I so earnestly desired not to meet," he became "the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England."10 Again, he marvels at the unmitigated patience and steadfastness of Divine Love. Calling God's humility "the most shining and obvious thing," Lewis discerns that "the hardness of God is kinder than the softness of men, and His compulsion is our liberation."11 Of God's magnificent but inscrutable love, Lewis says: "God who needs nothing, loves into existence wholly superfluous creatures in order that He may love and perfect them."12


11 Ibid., p. 229.

These same qualities—humility, patience, perseverance, goodness, etc.—are inherent in man's natural loves because they reflect Divine Love, according to Lewis. These Gift-loves, as Lewis labels them, differ from Divine Gift-love in that God desires nothing for Himself; natural Gift-love is motivated through interest in the beloved or expectancy of reward. But it is the nature of Divine Gift-love, bestowed upon man, that enables man to love the undesirable: criminals, enemies, and others who elicit social contempt.

According to Lewis, man can reciprocate Gift-love. Since one can willfully withhold his love from God, Lewis contends that one who befriends the stranger in need and one who confesses his sins in obedience to God is one who returns Gift-love to God. Moreover, through ready obedience to the will of God, God bestows other gifts—often invisible to natural man.

Delivered by Grace, says Lewis, a supernatural Need-love of himself appears to the obedient man. Disparaging the traditional notion of man's innate depravity, Lewis maintains that this gift enables man to see his own worth. He observes that "we are mirrors whose brightness, if we are bright, is wholly derived from the sun that shines upon us." In almost childlike joy, the man who receives this gift delights in his newly discovered possession: his glorious self.

Another supernatural Gift-love is man's discovery of

Need-love of one another. Although this love is not always the most desirable, one must be able to accept this love which appears in cases of persons who cannot reciprocate the love—physically, financially or otherwise. Thus, he concludes that "as Christ is perfect God and perfect Man, the natural loves are called to become perfect Charity and also perfect natural loves."\(^{14}\) Lamenting the fact that some advertise their supposedly charitable nature, Lewis claims that authentic charity is really unnoticed—even in ourselves. Totally surrendered to God's will, one unconsciously forgets his will.

In *The Problem of Pain* Lewis discusses the necessity of one's obedience to God's will. He discerns that God's will is enveloped in His Divine wisdom and goodness which ordains "the intrinsically good" for man.\(^{15}\) Lewis recalls Abraham's test of obedience which illustrated endurance unbeknown to Abraham himself until God provided the test. Moreover, Lewis claims that since God wills good for man it is good for man to love Him who plans to provide what man needs, not what he merely wants. Of a surrender to God's love Lewis says:

... to love Him we must know Him: and if we know Him, we shall in fact fall on our faces. If we do not, that only shows that what we are trying to love is not yet God—though it may be the nearest approximation to God which our thought and fantasy can attain. Yet the call is not only to prostration and awe; it is to a reflection of the Divine life, a creaturely participation in the Divine attributes which is far beyond our present desires. We are bidden to "put on Christ," to become like God. That is, whether we like it or not,

\(^{14}\)Ibid., p. 184.

\(^{15}\)Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, p. 100.
God intends to give us what we need, not what we now think we want.16

Of course, Lewis realizes that man cannot always have a Christ-like attitude toward others, but he maintains that man's effort to do His will indicates his willingness to obey the commandment to love God. Moreover, as he says in The Weight of Glory, one of the rewards of obeying God's will is the actual enjoyment in doing so.17

By submitting the will to God's commandments, man achieves the gifts reserved for those who have approached a relationship with Divine Love. Although the transformation will not be completed in earthly life, man's changed nature—an image of God's nature—will reflect the perfect state of love, wisdom, joy, beauty, and immortality. These gifts, described in Mere Christianity, "are a great fountain of energy and beauty spurting up at the very centre of reality."18 If man is in communion with God, he can partake of the gifts which bring happiness and peace—states of mind derived solely from God.

Although Lewis describes Divine Love as comforting, he also depicts the terrifying side of Divine Love. Suggesting that God cannot afford to shower total goodness on man who quickly forgets the source of his happiness, he asserts that

16Ibid., p. 53.


18Lewis, Mere Christianity, p. 153.
God judges man and condemns him if he places self above God on the throne of love. In Mere Christianity, Lewis says: "God does not judge him on the raw material at all, but on what he has done with it." Man's moral choices illustrate his sense of direction in making his path toward a relationship with God.

In his analysis of Christian behavior, Lewis notes that the most singular evidence in solving the problem of man's separation from God appears in a form of selfishness—pride. Calling pride "the great sin," Lewis contends that "it is enmity. And not only enmity between man and man, but enmity to God." Maintaining that the arrogant, pride-filled man cannot see God as one above him, Lewis suggests that such a man begins to think that he is good and becomes spiritually deadened to his need of God. Such a deadly pride Lewis calls "spiritual cancer" because it destroys the possibility of a vital relationship with Divine Love and the hope of receiving eternal life. According to Lewis, when the self usurps the sovereignty of God, evil appears in the form of the devil.

Maintaining that there is a powerful presence of evil in the universe, Lewis believes that there is a strategic war against goodness—against God's soldiers who defend what Lewis

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19 Ibid., p. 86.
20 Ibid., p. 111.
21 Ibid., p. 112.
calls the "Cardinal" and "Theological" virtues. Enabling man to resist the invasion of evil in his relationship to God, the "Cardinal" virtues--courage, justice, wisdom, and temperance--also provide the proper frame for man's success with his fellow human beings. Lewis holds that courage undergirds man's ability to defend the other virtues and that justice insures man against the invasion of greed. Also, he contends that man's pursuit of wisdom alerts him to the task that God has planned for him and that temperance checks his dangerous desire to succumb to anything that might usurp God's eminence in man's life. Of the latter Lewis notes, contrary to some popular denominational beliefs, that temperance refers "not specially to drink, but to all pleasures" and that it means "going to the right length and no further." Of the "Theological" virtues--Faith, Hope, and Charity--Lewis says that they are the foundation of the Christian life. Accepting on Faith the goodness of Divine Love, one can have the Hope of Heaven if he has accepted the Gift-love of God, His Charity.

In The Four Loves Lewis describes the necessity of living the virtuous life. Insisting that the practicing of the Christian principles of patience and forgiveness leads man to an imitation of Divine Love, Lewis, speaking of man's loves, says that "only those into which Love Himself has entered

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22 Ibid., p. 74.

23 Ibid., p. 75.
will ascend to Love Himself."  

Moreover, he claims that only if Christ is in man will he inherit the everlasting life of heaven. Of those persons who have submitted to Christ's love he says:

And these can be raised with Him only if they have, in some degree and fashion, shared His death; if the natural element in them has submitted--year after year, or in some sudden agony--to transmutation.

Yet he notes that those persons who have insisted on ignoring the virtuous life and the sacrificial love of Christ will forfeit the joys of Heaven for the horrors of Hell. Illustrating his concern for those sentenced to perdition, Lewis remarks that "there is no doctrine which I would more willingly remove from Christianity than this, if it lay in my power."

Indicating that it is total selfishness in man that determines his sentence to Hell, Lewis maintains that it is very likely that the determined self-willed person remains defiant even in the midst of Hell. Since Hell was not made for God's men, Lewis argues that man cannot know more than he was told by Christ who stated that it is a place of banishment and punishment, as it is described in Matthew 25. Thus, Lewis concludes that man loses his humanity in Hell. However, he argues that it is a Christian's duty to "make every effort

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25 Ibid.
for the conversion" of those bound for Hell—even at the risk of his own life. 27

Sometimes people are bewildered at the seemingly indifferent cruelty of a loving God who permits pain and suffering in the lives of men—even his disciples—says Lewis. Yet he maintains that the wickedness of man accounts for four-fifths of the sufferings in the world. 28

Indicating that natural physical pain in man can serve as an instrument for calling attention to the power of God, Lewis says that "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world." 29 With this argument Lewis defends God's allowing pain to pervade the universe; he maintains that in every action God works for the ultimate good for man. Suggesting that the inability for man to reconcile human suffering with the presence of a God of love stems from his misconception of God's love, Lewis claims that man must accept that God has a purpose for every action.

Arguing that good can be found in evil or suffering, Lewis notes the apparent results of man's tribulations. First, he recollects that in the front-line trenches of the war he found a remarkable spirit in those who were suffering; then

27 Ibid., p. 121.
28 Ibid., p. 89.
29 Ibid., p. 93.
he notes that in the ascetic's practices, the voluntary sufferer demonstrates his willingness to subordinate his body to the will. Of both, Lewis ascertains that the results beneficially affect the observer who feels pity or admiration for another human being. Through one's physical suffering another can alter his attitude or his life because that suffering evokes a response to something outside the self. Also, in Hebrews 2:10 Lewis finds substantiating evidence that Divine Love promises perfection through suffering. Thus, through suffering, anguish, or tribulation, Lewis says that occasionally God can shock man into a realization that he is not sufficient in himself. Moreover, he conjectures that man's tribulation cannot terminate in this world "till God sees that world to be either redeemed or no further redeemable."30 However, no matter what the situation, man, like Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane, must accept his tribulation as God's will and believe that He wills the best for him.

Convinced that in Heaven there will be no earthly sorrows or tribulations, Lewis asserts that man must look toward that future life which diminishes both treasures and tribulations of this earthly world. Although Lewis realizes that belief in the existence of Heaven is frequently avoided or even denied, he urges man to be vitally concerned with Heaven. Persuaded that contemporary education directs man's attention to this world, Lewis holds that man must retrieve that heavenly vision

30 Ibid., p. 114.
apparent in the Apostles, the religious leaders of the Middle Ages, and the English Evangelicals. Simultaneously, he admonishes man to examine his own heart in order to discover that what he yearns for is not available in this earthly world. Stating in *The Weight of Glory* that he knows that "no one can enter heaven except as a child," Lewis indicates that man must abandon all the sophisticated airs and conventions that this world has taught him—including false pride.  

Stripped of all educational and social veneer, the humble man who stands before Divine Love Himself discovers what Lewis calls "a supernatural Appreciative love" for God. Understanding that he is really loved by God enables man to meet glory and thus prove that he has "good report with God, acceptance by God, response, acknowledgement, and welcome into the heart of things." Finally, man has discovered the longing of his heart, his place in God's universe, and his assurance of being loved. With such blessed knowledge, man feels the depths of human love embraced by the overwhelming power of Divine Love. Having passed the test of earthly life, man receives the merit of glory—which Lewis describes as a "weight of glory" which man's "thoughts can hardly sustain."

33Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*, p. 11.
34Ibid., p. 10.
Such a man has encountered Divine Love Himself at last.

As he indicates in his book of essays *God in the Dock*, Lewis believes that every man must work out his own salvation. But he admits that puzzling mysteries will stump and discourage man; nevertheless, he urges man to work toward that relationship of love with God who "will look to every soul like its first love because He is its first love."36

Assured that the promise of heaven will become a reality, Lewis offers his interpretation of what man can expect of his glorious new home. First, in *Mere Christianity*, he explains, in his view, the biblical imagery associated with Heaven:

Musical instruments are mentioned because for many people (not all) music is the thing known in the present life which most strongly suggests ecstasy and infinity. Crowns are mentioned to suggest the fact that those who are united with God in eternity share His splendour and power and joy. Gold is mentioned to suggest the timelessness of Heaven (gold does not rust) and the preciousness of it.37

Quite cleverly Lewis notes that those persons who accept literally such symbolic descriptions of the harps, crowns, and gold that one possesses in Heaven also must assume that when Christ told man to be like the dove that he literally meant that he should lay eggs. What Lewis apparently means is that man should not expect the earthly treasures to be the prizes of Heaven. Moreover, man cannot attach too weighty an


37Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, p. 121.
interpretation of that which is unknown to man's experience. Instead, he must accept on Faith the assurance of God's promise of eternal life.

Stating his own position in accepting the authenticity of Jesus, Lewis asserts unreservedly his belief in the divinity. In *Mere Christianity*, in a chapter entitled "The Practical Conclusion," Lewis states:

> In other words, I believe it on His authority. Do not be scared by the word authority. Believing things on authority only means believing them because you have been told by someone you think trustworthy. Ninety-nine percent of the things you believe are believed on authority.  

It was this acknowledgement that God has absolute authority in our lives that opened the door to his concealed longing to meet Divine Love. Having discovered the real God in 1929, C. S. Lewis began his crusade to reveal his insights to the questions that pervaded men's minds and hearts.

In *The Christian World of C. S. Lewis* Clyde Kilby states that "Lewis had come out on the other side of a door most of us never manage to enter." These words describe the monumental spiritual experience that Lewis had and described in his writings. Although he was a distinguished Oxford don, he wrote in a simple language of the most profound intellectual and spiritual discovery a man can make: Divine Love. Speaking of the writer and the Christian, Kilby notes that "Lewis holds

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38Ibid., p. 63.

up a higher standard of literary discipline than most writers and a higher standard of Christian discipleship than most clergymen." 40 In his closing of C. S. Lewis: Defender of the Faith, Richard B. Cunningham calls Lewis "an apostle to humanity" and says that the living witness of "the atheist turned evangelist and apologist" was his best argument for evidence of the Christian faith. 41

What seems the theme of most of Lewis's writing is that man needs to discover the joy found in Divine Love. Of Till We Have Faces one critic notes that in this novel Lewis "examines man's chances of winning God's love, and his chances of finding fulfillment in learning to love as God is supposed to love." 42 Even in his personal notes collected in Letters to an American Lady, Rita Anton notes that this charitable man who gave away two-thirds of his income reveals that "he loved God above all things." 43 Calling Lewis "this century's most famous Christian apologist," Joan Kerns Ostline claims that the mainstay of his letters is "spiritual encouragement and

40 Ibid., p. 5.


42 "Briefly Noted: Fiction," review of Till We Have Faces, by C. S. Lewis, in New Yorker 32 (9 February 1957): 116.

43 Rita Anton, review of Letters to an American Lady, by C. S. Lewis, in America 118 (3 February 1968): 163.
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Perhaps the most conclusive statement about C. S. Lewis's writings is that he illustrates that man cannot survive with mere human love relationships or self-determination. Through self-denial and total submission to God's will, Lewis claims that man can accept the sufferings of this world because he has the hope of eternal joy in Heaven. Moreover, Lewis asserts that in accepting the perfect Gift-love from God--Jesus Christ, His only beloved Son--man discovers the only love that leads to real joy, perfect love, and eternal life: Divine Love.

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