

CS LEWIS: EXPONENT OF TRADITION AND PROPHET OF POSTMODERNISM?

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SUMMARY

The 'postmodern challenge' is increasingly felt in the 'end of modernity' to which Gianni Vattimo refers. The West and the world has hitherto been dominated by what Andrew Gamble characterises as the Modern or Western Ideology. But the validity of that worldview and its associated ways of thinking, going back to the 'Enlightenment' and beyond, has come to be radically questioned. It is within this context that the work and thought of CS Lewis is examined. Although Lewis is generally recognised, and regarded himself, as conservative and even reactionary, there is a paradoxical quality to his conservatism, the elements of which coexist with features which might be regarded as liberal and as radically socialist respectively. Similarly, his commitment to the religious and cultural tradition of Western Europe co-exists with a vehement anticolonialism. A paradoxical association of postmodernism with 'premodernity' has been widely noted in Buddhism and, by Derrida, in Eastern Christian theology. This thesis seeks to demonstrate that a paradoxical postmodernism is evident in the thought of Lewis. One source suggested for this is his interest in Eastern Christianity. Another is identified as the influence on Lewis of the opposition of Romanticism to 'Enlightenment' modernity. But Lewis's own engagement with modernity is also shown to be significant. Two broad trends in postmodernism are discussed. The affinities of Lewis's thought with the nihilistic tradition of postmodernism, going back to Nietzsche, is traced with regard to issues such as rationalism, science, the autonomy of the subject, and authorship. But the ambivalent relationship of Lewis to spiritually-oriented, affirmative postmodernism, and particularly Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophy, is also analysed. The crucial role of Scholasticism in the development of Western thought is investigated in a comparison of Steiner's views with the Christian position of Lewis. It is concluded that there are grounds to regard Lewis as 'prophet of postmodernism', and he is compared with Nietzsche and Pope John-Paul II in this regard.

KEY TERMS

Anthroposophy; Christian tradition; Eastern Christianity; Enlightenment; Modernity; Myth; Mysticism;. Negative Theology; Personalism; Postmodernism; Romanticism; Rationalism; Scholasticism; Theism.

PREFACE

In its original form this thesis was submitted to the University of South Africa as a dissertation of limited scope for the degree of Master of Theology by coursework. In evaluating the work of CS Lewis the focus of the dissertation was primarily on the postmodernism which stands in the nihilistic tradition of Friedrich Nietzsche, and which is the subject of most academic discourse on postmodernism. It was, therefore, affinities or divergences from features generally identified with this tradition of postmodernism which formed the substance of the analysis of Lewis's work in the research for the original dissertation. However, in reviewing postmodernism in the dissertation, it was recognised that there are other understandings of what constitutes the postmodern, and in this regard some attention was given to spiritually-oriented movements of the late twentieth century. Although this was not followed up in the research reported in the subsequent chapters, in the original conclusion of the dissertation particular reference was made to current, postmodern Goddess spirituality, as an issue on which some relevant commentary was to be found in the work of CS Lewis, and which would provide a topic worthy of consideration in further research on Lewis and postmodernism. Thus, when the opportunity was offered to upgrade the dissertation for resubmission as a doctoral thesis, it was this topic which most immediately came to mind in considering the elaboration of the original work. Initially this elaboration was conceived in terms of supplementing existing chapters with extra sections and possibly adding a new chapter specifically on the 'Goddess' issue. It became clear, however, that too much was involved for it to be fitted into this format and that, while the topic of Goddess spirituality was very relevant, it could not be discussed except in the context of a wider phenomenon of 'affirmative postmodernism'. And, while this 'affirmative postmodernism' is in large measure a social, as well as a religious phenomenon, it was clear that there are attempts to provide a theoretical basis to it as well. The most sophisticated of these, perhaps, is found in Richard Tarnas's *Passion of the Western Mind*, but what was recognised as being important, for the purposes of this thesis, was the significant use which Tarnas made of the work of Rudolf Steiner. Steiner, and his system of Anthroposophy,

provided a special point of contact between affirmative postmodernism and the thought of CS Lewis through Lewis's close friendships with leading Anthroposophists, and his consequent, though ambivalent, engagement with Steiner's thought.

In the writing of this thesis, therefore, apart from some modifications to the first five, original chapters, and a reformulation of the concluding chapter, three further chapters have been added on affirmative postmodernism: a review of affirmative postmodern tendencies in general, an analysis of Lewis's thought in terms of aspects of this broad spectrum of types of postmodernism, and a discussion in which Steiner's Anthroposophy is used in attempting to throw light on the possible nature of a postmodern Christianity. Because it is essential to a full appreciation of the 'negative' postmodernism considered in the first five chapters, the original, brief reference to affirmative postmodernism, in Chapter Two, has been retained. In the course of Chapters Three, Four and Five, further comments are made on 'affirmative postmodernism' where this is necessary in order to draw attention to links between 'negative' and 'affirmative' postmodernisms, but the detailed review of 'affirmative postmodernism' is provided in Chapter Six. This then leads directly on to the chapters on the further analysis of Lewis's work, in terms of affirmative postmodernism, and the discussion of Steiner's thought in relation to Lewis's traditional Christian position. However, an additional chapter has also been included which takes up the affirmative element in the thought of Nietzsche, the original 'prophet of postmodernism', referred to in the initial review of postmodernism. This affirmative note in Nietzsche complements the nihilism of his attack on modern thought and although, in contrast to his nihilism, it receives little recognition in current affirmative postmodernism, it finds strong echoes in the thought of CS Lewis, particularly with regard to their common focus on joy. This reflection on joy leads on naturally to a consideration of its association with morality which, in different ways is found in both Nietzsche and Lewis. Rather than being presented as a substantive part of the research presented in this thesis, this discussion is offered as a pointer to something of interest in the context of the present research which may be worthy of further research in its own right. It is therefore grouped together, as a post script, with the concluding chapter in the overall structure of this thesis.

The thesis has been organised into four parts so as to give order to the chapter structure which emerged as a result of the process described above:

Part I: The commencing review chapter on the work and thought of CS Lewis

Part II: The four chapters following this first chapter, as in the original dissertation

Part III: The three additional chapters on 'affirmative postmodernism'

Part IV: The concluding chapter and the comparison between Lewis and the affirmative Nietzsche.

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INTRODUCTION

CS Lewis first became publicly known through his popular theological talks, broadcast over the British Broadcasting Corporation during the years of World War II, and later published as *Mere Christianity*. In his preface to this book he states that his task is to "explain and defend the belief which has been common to nearly all Christians at all times" (Lewis, 1955:6). The work of Lewis will be discussed in more detail in Chapter One but at this point we may note the concept of tradition which is implied in Lewis's understanding of Christianity. Lewis does not only uphold a commonality across Christianity in the sense in which contemporary ecumenism might; he sees, equally, a unity of belief extending over the centuries of Christianity's existence. In this regard, though, his friend Bede Griffiths argues that he had "very little sense of the Church as a living organism, growing by stages through the centuries" (Griffiths, 1979:21). What Griffiths has in mind here is the understanding of tradition presented in Newman's 'Development of Christian Doctrine' (Ker, ed, 1990). It may be true that Lewis held a rather static view of Christian belief, which might not be regarded as adequate to the Catholic concept of tradition with which Griffiths compares his position, but perhaps this was because Lewis's major focus was elsewhere than on tradition as development. In his 'Mere Christianity' Lewis (1955:9) sought to articulate an understanding of the way in which God "speaks with one voice" in different Christian communions "against all divergences of belief". But, whatever the case in this regard, in the obligation which he felt to "earnestly contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints" (Epistle of Jude:3, KJV), Lewis was firmly committed to the tradition of what he understood as 'mere' Christian belief, handed down from that original "faith once delivered" and enduring through the centuries. He recognised, in the same way as Murray (1964), that the understanding of the content of that faith might develop from a symbolic to an analytic understanding (Lewis, 1963) while its content remained the same. However, Lewis (1990a) explicitly draws a distinction between the Catholic and Protestant positions on this last point. There is scope here for much further discussion and argument, and this is provided in a number of papers of Lewis (eg Lewis, 1979a; 1987a; 1987b), but the adherence of

Lewis to the idea of tradition is unambiguous. As will be shown in the following chapter, Lewis's position on tradition in the theological realm was accompanied by a wider, social conservatism. This raises the question of how is it possible to suggest a link with the postmodern when it might be said that Lewis was not even receptive to what is modern.

In *Teach Yourself Postmodernism*, Ward (1997) describes the faddish popularity which the term 'postmodern' achieved in the last two decades of the twentieth century. He comments that,

"References to it can now crop up in a comic way in lager commercials in a spoof of 'arty types', advertisers being confident that their target audience is aware of the *word* postmodernism, if not exactly its meaning. And in a TV soap it would not now be out of place for the 'boffin' or 'bookworm' character, probably in an attempt to impress someone, to drop postmodernism into the conversation." (Ward, 1997:2)

It is this kind of voguishness against which the deeply engrained, social conservatism of CS Lewis would naturally have risen up. The rise in popularity of the use of the term 'postmodernism' represents exactly the kind of academic innovation and pseudo-intellectualism, both of which are associated with postmodernism, to which Lewis was opposed. In a key address in 1945, just at the point at which postmodernism was about to begin to develop towards the contemporary meaning of the term (Bradbury, 1995), Lewis (1987c:16) warned against "yielding to winds of doctrine" and becoming "slaves of fashion" in the academic realm:

"The standard of permanent Christianity must be kept clear in our minds and it is against this standard that we must test all contemporary thought. In fact we must at all costs *not* move with the times. We serve One who said, 'Heaven and Earth shall move with the times, but my words shall not move with the times!'"

On the other hand, in suggesting that Lewis's thought and character are not, or would not have been, amenable to postmodernism, we are setting Lewis against, not only academic fads and fashions, but also streams of thought of longer standing. Amongst those streams of thought are two which he would have taken very seriously and with which, at least in the forms current in his day, he engaged energetically. One of them has its immediate origin

in the thought of Friedrich Nietzsche but has flowed on, in the course of the twentieth century, to diversify in the delta of 'sceptical' or 'deconstructive' postmodern theory, which came to dominate much of late twentieth century thought. The other originates in the 'real religion' which Lewis discerned behind much of the 'irreligion' and 'unbelief' which he confronted in the England of his time (see Lewis, 1960:85). This was the contemporary expression of the age-old pantheism, expressed in the pre-Christian Nature religions, with which the thought of Lewis was so often engaged, and which has issued in the Neopaganism of the late twentieth century (Harvey, 1997). In one form or another, this continuing religious inclination in modern English society, which in Lewis's experience did not perish even in the midst of modern 'secularism', has bloomed again in the new religiosity and spirituality of the second half of the twentieth century (Steyn, 1994). This blossoming has not been restricted to Lewis's England and has occurred throughout the West under the conditions of what Vattimo (1988) calls 'the end of modernity'. It has been encompassed under the title of 'constructive postmodernism' by Griffin (1990) but will be returned to in Chapter Six, especially in the particular form advocated by Richard Tarnas, author of *The Passion of the Western Mind* (Tarnas, 1996).

Both 'deconstructive' and 'constructive' postmodernisms will be addressed in the exploration of Lewis's thought, but his relationship to the sources, from which each drew, is complex and asymmetrical. Although Lewis may have had a near-instinctual affinity for the 'constructive variety', with its veneration of nature and pantheist spirituality (see eg Lewis, 1959), both varieties of the postmodern are at variance with Lewis's Christian worldview (Payne, 1988). But if this opposition is in some sense tempered in Lewis's attitude to the sources of what gave rise to 'constructive postmodernism', his opposition to Nietzschean-inspired 'deconstructive postmodernism' is vehement and unalloyed with any admiration. In his paper, 'The poison of subjectivism', Lewis (1981c:103-4) argues that,

"From the Stoic and Confucian, 'Do not do to others what you would not like them to do to you'; to the Christian, 'Do as you would be done by', is a real advance. The morality of Nietzsche is a mere innovation. ... It is the difference between a man who says to us: 'You like your vegetables moderately fresh; why not grow your own and

have them perfectly fresh?' and a man who says, 'throw away that loaf and try eating bricks and centipedes instead'."

It may be objected that Nietzsche deserves much more than this summary dismissal, but this excerpt comes, in fact, from a closely argued case on the nature of ethics. In the same way, the various 'sceptical' postmodernisms, which stand in the tradition of Nietzsche's nihilism, may demand more sympathetic attention, as Hart (1989) does give from within the broad Christian theological tradition. But Snyder (1988) writes from within the Nietzschean tradition when he insists that all the old humanistic values are invalidated with the 'end of modernity' as it is understood within postmodern theory. It is this type of postmodernism which is most immediately associated with the term in academic circles and it is this type of thought which is clearly most objectionable to Lewis. In this light the attempt to 'canonise' Lewis as a prophetic postmodern voice would seem to be particularly paradoxical, if not absurd. But it will be argued that it is precisely this paradoxical note which is characteristic of the thought of Lewis on a variety of key issues. A concern with 'paradox' and 'mystery' is part of the tradition of Latin as well as Eastern Christianity but it is in the Christian East that they are especially emphasised (Lossky, 1976, Ware, 1979). The 'Eastern connection' in Lewis's thought is, therefore, stressed particularly in this thesis. In addition, the Eastern Christian tradition, despite its air of antiquity, will be shown to be relevant to the postmodern question by virtue of modes of thinking, and of understanding humanity and the world, which distinguish it from the modern worldview and modern thought which have been called into question with the 'postmodern turn' of the second half of the twentieth century. Apart from the association with the Eastern Christian tradition, though, it will be shown that there is, in the thought of CS Lewis, a direct engagement with other issues raised by modern thought. This engagement, and particularly Lewis's endeavour to address the internal inconsistencies and flaws in modern thought, also requires evaluation as to its status *vis-a-vis* the postmodern. These two, possibly related factors, of Lewis's 'Eastern connection' and his engagement with the modernism of the West, must be considered in attempting to come to a conclusion regarding Lewis's role as prophet of postmodernism.

In Chapter One a review of the work and thought of CS Lewis is provided. Rather than offering a summarised version of the kind of general autobiographical account, of which several have been published, this chapter will focus on apparently paradoxical strands within the work and thought of Lewis which might be relevant to the research question of this study. These include the following:

- Lewis as traditionalist and conservative including his self-conscious Christian orthodoxy and his anti-revolutionary social theory.
- Lewis as liberal, especially his concern for the freedom of individual persons, for democracy and the absolute necessity of political equality, as well as his strong anti-fascism.
- Lewis as radical, including his commitment to economic equality, his almost Marxist view of the operation of the modern economy, and his anti-colonialism.

In addition to these apparently contradictory currents within his thought, passing reference will be made in this dissertation to Lewis as anti-individualist, anti-egalitarian and anti-feminist. Implications of this paradoxical and seemingly unsystematic mix of features will be traced in relation to Lewis's alleged postmodernism.

In Chapter Two a review of the broad field of the postmodern, in both society and social theory, is provided. As in Chapter One, the inclination to furnish a summarised account of the type of broad treatment of postmodernism, which is provided by Ward (1997) and other authors, is resisted. Instead the emphasis is placed on aspects which are linked particularly to the question of Lewis's alleged postmodernism:

- Consideration of the claim that Friedrich Nietzsche is 'father' and 'prophet' of postmodernism, including some comparison with the status of Lewis in this regard.
- Discussion of postmodernism and postmodernity as theoretical and societal phenomena respectively, with a brief historical review, and some comment on Lewis's position.
- A review of postmodern theory with reference to major deconstructive theorists in the tradition of Nietzschean nihilism, along with reference to affinities of these with the apophaticism of the Eastern Christian tradition.
- Reflection on alternatives to nihilism, particularly as offered in 'affirmative' or

'constructive' postmodernism.

- A focus on the 'resurgence of the spiritual' as one aspect of this positive postmodernism, and its relation to the position of Lewis.

- The debate about the supposed emancipatory radicalism of deconstructive postmodernism, with particular reference to the neo-Marxist critique of Terry Eagleton and David Hawkes, and the anti-western critique of Ziauddin Sardar.

The chapter concludes by attempting to relate these various aspects to Lewis especially in the light of his Eastern Christian as well as his Anthroposophical associations.

In Chapter Three the supposed distinguishing characteristics of premodernity, modernity and postmodernity are analysed with a view to the evaluation of Lewis's position in terms of these categories. Difficulties in usage, pertaining to these terms are discussed, in particular the impression created of a universal historical process to which all societies are subject, and the Western cultural imperialism which this implies according to Sardar. The domination of the world by the modern West is appraised with reference to its contingent nature and the implications of this for the phenomenon of the postmodern. Particular attention is given to the existence within 'premodern' or non-western societies of modes of thought which might be classified as 'postmodern' even though they pre-date modernity in the West by centuries or millennia. Apart from cases such as that of Buddhism, the position of the Eastern Christian tradition is dealt with as an instance of this 'premodern postmodernism' which holds particular relevance for this study. The special importance of myth, in the evaluation of the nature of the relationship between premodern, modern and postmodern, is discussed in this chapter even though it is also one of the features of CS Lewis's thought which is considered at length in Chapter Five.

In Chapter Four the theme of the relationship of the Eastern Christian tradition to the postmodern is analysed in a detailed consideration which also compares it to the Christianity of the West. This is seen to be important in view of the particular relationship of Western Christianity to modernity. The link between Christianity and the modern, in the West, is not

merely a question of the impact of modernisation on Christianity. More important to the argument of this thesis, is the extent to which medieval Western Christendom provided the precursors from which modernity emerged - even though it was as the ungrateful offspring which disowned its parent. With regard to the Eastern Christian tradition, therefore, the question is to what extent the distance between it and the West, and thus between it and modernity, provides the occasion for it to be relevant in an era of the 'end of modernity'. A number of special characteristics and emphases within the Eastern tradition are identified and discussed in detail. These relate to the issues of rationalism, substantialism in the understanding of the nature of concepts, the nature of the human subject, apophaticism or negative theology, metaphysics and the question of 'presence', and the supposed neutrality of objective knowledge. In the discussion of these different aspects, links with the thought of Lewis are dealt with where they are relevant, even though it is in Chapter Five that the major review of the work of Lewis *vis-a-vis* postmodernism is presented. The inclusion of some references to Lewis in Chapter Four reflects the observation, made earlier in this introduction, that the 'postmodernism' of Lewis may be attributed to at least two sources; firstly his links with the Eastern Christian tradition and secondly his own, direct engagement with modernity.

In Chapter Five a systematic analysis is presented of features of Lewis's thought which, it is argued, yield evidence of his prescient view of modernism and the seeds of its eventual collapse which it carried within itself. Prior to this a description is given of the methodological approach which was adopted, and the categories which were used, in the analysis of Lewis's work. These categories include comments of Lewis on modern humanism, the belief in the creative originality of the individual, the nature of authorship, the question of the truth of science, the modern concern with 'Progress', the nature of human reason, the issue of the foundations of thought and the place of myth in this, the problems inherent in systems of thought especially metaphysical systems, and, finally, the problem of unity and the 'loss of the centre'. In all of these attention is given to the question of whether Lewis can in some sense be considered a 'postmodernist before his time' or whether,

or to what degree, he is merely anti-modernist. Apart from the information yielded by the application of these categories to Lewis's work, there is further material from Lewis's writings which is not discussed in Chapter Five but which is incorporated in the remaining chapters of the thesis.

In Chapter Six, as a prelude to further analysis of Lewis's thought, a review is provided of 'affirmative postmodernism', including the postmodern resurgence of the spiritual, which is the unexpected concomitant of nihilistic postmodern thought. An alternative epistemological approach to that typical of modernity, which is discredited by sceptical postmodern thought, is outlined as a possible feature of 'affirmative postmodernism'. This approach is linked with the monism which is characteristic of this type of postmodernism and leads on to a consideration of the emphasis on divine immanence, the notion of the 'sacred cosmos', and the spirituality of the 'Great Mother', which are characteristic elements of the various forms of 'affirmative postmodernism'.

In Chapter Seven Lewis's thought is analysed in terms of its affinities and divergences with spiritually-oriented affirmative postmodernism in general, although it is noted that it is especially divergences which are evident. Despite some commonality with regard to epistemology and the archetypal character of the 'symbolic universe', major differences are identified in respect of other aspects dealt with in Chapter Six. These differences are identified as being associated with the traditional Christian theism of Lewis, and the distinction between God and world which it implies. Arising from this, the question of the personal, in relation to both human and divine nature, is raised as a vital issue dividing Lewis's traditional Christian position from affirmative postmodernism in general.

In Chapter Eight features of Rudolf Steiner's system of Anthroposophy are explored in the light of the opinion of Owen Barfield that Anthroposophy is 'Romanticism come of age', and the links which are made in this thesis between Romanticism and postmodernism. The connection between Lewis and Anthroposophy is discussed with regard to both positive and

negative aspects of the ambivalent relation of Lewis to Anthroposophy. The development of modern thought according to Steiner is compared with the account by the Catholic Scholar, Hans Urs von Balthasar. This discussion is conducted with reference to the particular importance which both attach to Scholasticism, and attention is drawn to Steiner's monism as the crucial factor dividing the Anthroposophical and Christian positions. It is concluded that Steiner's thought is somewhat atypical in character in respect of affirmative postmodernism but that it may constitute an alternative mode of being postmodern. It is argued that, in the same way, the Christian position of Lewis may also be regarded as providing an alternative mode of being postmodern.

Chapter Nine constitutes a conclusion to this thesis in which the evidence relating to the apparent contradiction in the thesis title is weighed up and the role of CS Lewis as exponent of tradition and prophet of postmodernism is assessed. The sources of the 'postmodern' in the thought of Lewis are identified as lying in his familiarity with other traditions of thought outside of modernity, as well as with the tradition of opposition to modern thought within the West. But Lewis's own engagement with issues raised by modern thought is highlighted. A conclusion is drawn regarding the postmodernism of Lewis, with particular reference to its relevance to the orthodox Christian and tradition, which Lewis consciously saw himself as upholding, and to the 'Real Presence' which Payne (1988) identifies as the characteristic feature of the worldview of Lewis.

Chapter Ten is offered as a 'post script' in which Lewis's thought is compared with particular elements in the thought of two other prophetic figures who, in different ways, may be regarded as having significance *vis-a-vis* postmodernism. Lewis's idea of 'Joy' is related to the place of joy in Nietzsche's thought and is used in understanding reason, morality and faith in the light of postmodernism. This leads to a further consideration of myth and imagination, and comparison of Lewis's thought with recent writings of Pope John-Paul II on the related issues of faith and reason.

PART I

THE PARADOXICAL CS LEWIS

CHAPTER 1

CS LEWIS: HIS WORK AND THOUGHT

CHAPTER ONE

CS LEWIS: HIS WORK AND THOUGHT

1.1 CS Lewis: conservative religious phenomenon

If we are to take the work and thought of CS Lewis as a subject of study then, unless this study is to be conducted within the limited confines of Lewis's scholarly field of language and literature, our focus must be largely on his popular religious works, as well as his related writings in which he provides comment on social and philosophical issues. While it is true to say that his literary works, which are briefly reviewed below, left their mark in their field, his major continuing impact has been in the religious sphere. One early indication of the extent of Lewis's impact was the appearance of his portrait on the cover of *Time* magazine in September 1947. Another striking phenomenon has been the frequency with which he has been quoted by authors from across the spectrum of Christianity, from Protestant Evangelicalism (eg. Morris, 1964) to Eastern Orthodoxy (eg. Ware, 1979). Wilson (1991:308) reports that, as Archbishop of Krakow, Pope John Paul II 'was always talking about Lewis'. But this public attention has also included attacks, especially from modernist theologians such as Norman Pittenger (Lewis, 1987b) and scathing critical comment (eg. Wilson, 1991), which Lewis sometimes drew on himself by his conscious and even vaunted disdain for modern thought and modernity in general (Wain, 1979). But whatever Lewis's weaknesses and faults may have been, opposition should be expected in principle from those whose essential paradigm he attacked in the course of his defence of both traditional Christian orthodoxy (eg Lewis, 1955) and classical philosophical principles, such as natural law (eg Lewis, 1978). By its very nature the modern mind, could only regard as reactionary and obscurantist one who called into question such sacred cows as the belief in progress. Lewis's rejection of the principles emerging out of the naturalistic, materialist worldview which is at the heart of nineteenth and twentieth century modern thought, is central to an

understanding of his position. While this may have been taken as reactionary conservatism by the majority of his academic contemporaries, it is part of the contention of this thesis that the distance which Lewis maintained, between his thinking and modern thought, allowed him to take a view of things which might be judged as having surprising affinities with postmodernism as it has developed since his death. It is ironic that what made Lewis out-of-date in academic circles in the 1940's and 1950's, may now give grounds for him to be considered to be ahead of his time with regard to issues which form part of the substance of contemporary postmodern discourse. But, before the collapse of modern confidence had really begun to take hold, this made Lewis a particular embarrassment to those theologians and church leaders who were expending much effort in reinterpreting Christianity in terms of modern categories in order to demonstrate its respectability according to the canons of modern thought (see eg Harper, 1997). His chosen task of apologist and populariser of traditional Christian doctrine was particularly unwelcome in a context in which supernaturally-oriented religion in general, and Christian orthodoxy in particular, was viewed as being on a par with superstition and was regarded as inimical to the imperative of progress.

Lewis's success in the popularisation of Christian thought and religion made him a major religious phenomenon of the mid- and especially late twentieth century. Lindskoog (1994) has gone as far to refer to a 'CS Lewis industry' in relation to the publication of his books, something of which she, as an admirer of Lewis, is highly critical. But what is most striking about Lewis and his work is its emphatic traditionalism, something which distinguishes Lewis from some other well-known religious writers, such as his contemporary, the Bishop of Woolwich, of 'Honest to God' fame and, at the present time, Don Cupitt who is known in Britain for his television programme, *The Sea of Faith*. The popularity of Lewis might in itself provide material for a research study in the sociology of religion, but the relation of the thought of Lewis to postmodern theory, and to the possible nature of a postmodern Christianity, is the particular task of this thesis. In this regard, the burgeoning popular interest in Lewis across the globe, after an initial falling off in sales of his books in the

decade after his death in 1963, might itself be viewed as part of the reaction against modernity. This would place, what Wilson (1991) regards as the developing Lewis cult, within the broad phenomenon of postmodern religion and spirituality (Steyn, 1994). However, the distinction drawn by Cupitt (1997) between 'right' and 'left' postmodernism indicates that reactions against modernity, and responses to the shaking of the foundations of modernity, may take the form of neo-conservatism or fundamentalism. This possibility must be taken into account before the ascription of postmodernism to CS Lewis can be properly interpreted.

Within the scope of this thesis it will not be presumed to engage in a systematic and detailed review of the full spectrum of Lewis's work. For the purposes of this study, a range of comments systematically culled from the works of Lewis, on issues relevant to the 'postmodern turn' within the present intellectual and academic world, will be analysed and commented on with a view to their application to the current situation. Therefore, after a summary review of Lewis's writings, we will proceed to focus specifically in this chapter on some authors who have evaluated his work in relation to modern thought. Thereafter, an assessment of Lewis's position in terms of his conservatism will be made. This will be an important aspect of the discussion of Lewis's thought since, despite his undoubted conservatism which will be explored below, it will be argued that Lewis cannot be categorised as just another case of the neo-conservatism which Cupitt (1997) characterises as 'right' postmodernism. This type of neo-conservatism may be seen as a reaction to the threat posed by the loss of old certainties. The undermining of foundations which is characteristic of the postmodern social situation, and which is also the subject of deconstructive postmodern theory, is countered in 'right' postmodernism, according to Cupitt, by the pathological attempt at a re-establishment of certainty. Gellner (1992), although differing from Cupitt's postmodern interpretation, concurs with him in attributing the origin, of what he describes as the fundamentalist tendency, to conditions which have emerged in the twentieth century. Within his own British, Anglican context, Cupitt identifies the post-War period of the 1950s as the heyday of a neo-conservative response,

which petered out as English society moved through the 1960s and on to the end of the century. The fact that CS Lewis reached an initial height of popularity in the post-War period, when there was longing by many for a return to stability, would be taken by Cupitt as a clear indication of Lewis's place within the general phenomenon of neo-conservatism. If this judgement of Lewis were to be valid then the postmodernism referred to in the title of this thesis would amount to nothing more than a neo-conservative attempt at imposing an illusory certainty in a situation on which 'the centre cannot hold'. It would not merit a doctoral thesis in order to demonstrate the occurrence of that kind of postmodern response - Lewis would merely provide one more instance of a type which, as Cupitt and Gellner maintain, is common in the second half of the twentieth century. Rather, it will be argued in this chapter that the paradoxical alignment of tradition and postmodernism, alluded to in the title of this thesis, is a manifestation of the wider paradoxical character which can be detected in the work and thought of Lewis. In presenting this case it will be argued that the conservatism, which is undoubtedly to be found in Lewis, is another particular instance of the paradoxical Lewis. Perhaps, though, Lewis's conservatism would only be paradoxical to those who have failed to notice the association, within the broad Christian tradition, of a commitment to radical social views, along with an adherence to tradition, in figures as widely different as St John Chrysostom, St Bernard of Clairvaux, St Francis of Assisi, St Thomas Aquinas and John Wesley. In any event, the nature of Lewis's conservatism will be analysed later in this chapter as a prelude to the discussion of his relation to postmodernism in subsequent chapters.

1.2 Reviewing the work of Lewis: conservatism versus modernism

It has already been pointed out that religion was not the professional field of Lewis who, until just before his death in 1963, was Professor of Medieval and Renaissance English in the University of Cambridge. In the field of language and literature he achieved international prominence as the author of, amongst others, *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition*, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century (The Oxford History of English Literature, Vol. III)*, *Studies in Words*, and *An Experiment in Criticism* (see the

bibliography by Hooper, 1979). In addition to these academic works he is known for his science-fiction trilogy, *Out of the Silent Planet*, *Voyage to Venus (or Perelandra)*, and *That Hideous Strength*, as well as his children's literature in the form of the seven volume *Chronicles of Narnia*. Lewis's religious writings were largely works of Christian apologetics, written from the point of view of a self-confessed amateur theologian. His contention that the theology in these writings was not to be considered original (see Lewis, 1955) can be confirmed by any reader with a background in Christian theology. This is entirely unsurprising in view of his intention to present the tradition of orthodox Christian thought in terms assimilable by lay-people. But, apart from his popular apologetics, Lewis's philosophical commentaries on intellectual and social questions also constitute an essential part of his non-academic publications. Although it was not strictly his professional field either, philosophy was part of Lewis's academic background (Lewis, 1959) and he brought his conservative but keenly critical mind to bear on wider problems related to his religious and social interests. It is in this regard that his work constitutes an often highly original view on issues which have subsequently become significant in the literature of postmodernism - this despite Lewis's rejection of the notion of originality within the context of modern thought (Lewis, 1981a). Apart from the concept of originality, these issues include, amongst others, the nature of authorship, the questions of the individuality and the insubstantiality of the human subject, the socially contingent nature of science, the critique of the principle of progress in modern thought, the crucial role of metaphor and myth as modes of truth, and the deconstruction (as it would now be called) of the materialistic and naturalistic model on which the modern worldview was founded in the wake of the 'Enlightenment'. In all of these, Lewis's opposition to modern thought might be taken as conservatism, and certainly would have appeared as that in the context of its time, but a few decades later that same kind of opposition is very much at one with postmodern radicalism - or 'left' postmodernism in Cupitt's categorisation. But, while these issues have, at this point, been cited as linking Lewis and postmodernism, a full exploration of them in relation to the work of Lewis must be left to later chapters. The question of Lewis's relation to conservatism must first be concluded here, as a springboard to the discussion of these issues.

In addition to primarily biographical works on CS Lewis, there have been a range of reviews, taking various forms, of Lewis's work and thought. Apart from *The CS Lewis Reader's Encyclopedia*, (Schultz & West eds, 1998) there are, for example, the works by Lindskoog (1973), Payne (1988) and Peters (1999). That by Lindskoog, *CS Lewis: Mere Christian*, focuses on topics in Lewis's thought under broad headings which each cover a few related chapters: "Reality: what is life all about?" (God, Nature, Man); "Destiny: what will become of us?" (Death, Heaven, Hell); "Mystery: how can we believe this business?" (Miracles, Prayer, Pain); and "Character: what does Christ cost us?" (Love, Ethics, Truth). This spectrum of topics gives an indication of the largely religious side of Lewis's work, for which he is best known. Payne's *Real Presence: The Christian Worldview of CS Lewis as Incarnational Reality* is somewhat similar in tenor although extending much more into reflection on the structure of Lewis's thought and the view of reality on which it was based. It relates these to general questions of mind, intellect and imagination, and their association with reality. Although the more theologically oriented headings of Lindskoog are not unrelated to the focus of this dissertation, Payne's work shares in that focus much more directly and thus will be returned to in later chapters. But Peter's work, *Simply CS Lewis: A Beginner's Guide to his Life and Work*, deals in a very specific way with Lewis's work in relation to modern thought in general - an approach that would seem to hold particular promise from the perspective of the present study. Peters's preface notes the pivotal nature of the twentieth century in "accentuating the challenges that the dominant social, economic and intellectual forces have thrust upon the Christian church in the world" (Peters1999:ix). In making this statement Peters appears to echo Gamble's (1981) *Introduction to Modern Social and Political Thought* in tracing how the twentieth century experienced the fruits (such as they were) of the "materialist and relativist ideologies" which developed in the wake of the rise of the urban-industrial society which "transformed the very foundations of modern existence" (Peters, 1999:ix). Gamble, however, traces the origin of modern social conditions and their accompanying ideologies much further back than the nineteenth century, to the breakdown of the feudal society of the Western Middle Ages. Lewis, too, in the *Abolition of Man* (1978), sees the origins of modern thought in the post-feudal

developments of the 'Renaissance'. He regarded this work as his most important and it is one which West (1998) sees as establishing themes which recur repeatedly elsewhere in Lewis's work. What is most significant, in the context of this study, is West's identification of the work of Friedrich Nietzsche as embodying the polar opposite of the conclusion reached by Lewis in the *Abolition of Man*. The relationship between the thought of Nietzsche and Lewis will occupy a place of crucial importance as this thesis proceeds, but at this point it is necessary to focus more closely on Peters's discussion of Lewis's relationship to modernity.

Peters deals directly with the 'Enlightenment', and its counterpoint in the Romantic movement, as setting the stage within which the thought of Lewis was expressed. The entries in the *CS Lewis Encyclopedia* of Schultz and West (1998) substantiate this approach of Peters, which any serious reader of Lewis's work would also be able to affirm. To a very great extent, the writings of Lewis, in addition to his own professional interests and his chosen task of popular Christian apologetics, reflect his grappling with the challenges of the philosophical, social and scientific thought of the age in which he found himself. What is, perhaps, surprising is the failure of Peters, and of the contributors to the *Encyclopedia*, to move beyond their consideration of Lewis's relationship to modern thought, to consider his thought in the light of the postmodernism so current in academic circles as they wrote. The encyclopedia entry by Aeschliman does deal with anti-modernism as a phenomenon within which Lewis can be placed and goes on to refer, amongst others, to the work of Pope John-Paul II in criticising the current "culture of nihilistic consumerism, pornography and violence" (Aeschliman, 1998:283). This is as much of a treatment postmodernism as can be found in the *Encyclopedia* although, at first sight, Peters's concluding chapter, 'CS Lewis and the Third Millennium' would seem to offer more hope of an engagement with the social phenomena and the theorists of the 'end of modernity'. Instead, its prime focus is on the continuation of the 'Enlightenment' tradition in the twentieth century, on which Peters offers the opinion that its ideas have not,

"retreated to unimportance as the twentieth century comes to its conclusion. The truth is very much the opposite and therein lies the continuing relevance and urgency of CS Lewis's writings today. Materialist philosophy and a vague sense of evolutionary progressivism are by far the dominant perspective particularly in America and Western Europe. The cult-like belief in empirical science and technology - and even in positivism - still dominates the field, especially among American intellectuals" (Peters, 1999:233).

While Peters's description of the leanings of American intellectuals in general may have the authority of first-hand observation, he has certainly missed the drift of thought, in the late twentieth century, amongst European intelligentsia as well as within important sections of American academia. To his concluding treatment of 'neo-Enlightenment' thought he does add a consideration of "The Romantic Stream Revisited" (Peters, 1999:242-244) but, even though he mentions the name of Nietzsche in the context of Romanticism, he fails to refer to the link between the Romantic movement and postmodern theory to which attention will be drawn in subsequent chapters. All that he does is to suggest the potential of elements of the Romantic heritage, as found in the thought of Lewis, to counter what he sees as the continuing influence of modernism and liberal theology within Christianity. But, while it is completely valid that Aeschliman and Peters should draw attention to Lewis's anti-modernism, and particularly to his opposition to 'Enlightenment' thought, it remains to be demonstrated how and in what ways Lewis's work may be applied within the current debate on issues arising out of the 'postmodern turn' which has occurred largely in the decades since Lewis's death. This will, it is to be hoped, be achieved in the course of this thesis. In part this task must rely on an initial evaluation of Lewis's position *vis-a-vis* interrelated issues of tradition versus radicalism, and conservatism versus liberalism and socialism. The outlook of Lewis with regard to these various intellectual positions throws much light on his relationship to postmodern intellectual radicalism or what many, though not all (see Hawkes, 1996) would consider as its radicalism.

1.3 Categorising Lewis: conservative and traditionalist

Over many years, from before his death, there have been numerous dissertations and theses completed on the work of CS Lewis. For example, a recent dissertation in the faculty of

theology of the University of Pretoria (Brand, 1994) took the theological position of Lewis as its topic. The problem which it sought to address was the devising and implementation of a set of criteria for the categorisation of Lewis as theologian. Although such a categorisation is not exactly the research task of this thesis, the category of 'postmodern theologian' is one which is employed by theologians as widely different as Hans Kung (Kung, 1995) and the evangelical, Alister McGrath (McGrath, 1994). However, in this study the concern is not theology alone. In general Lewis's writing is strongly permeated by his Christian worldview but, apart from the theological and apologetic orientation of his work, much of his writing falls within the parameters of what has recently come to be described broadly as social theory. In this connection West (1998:128) observes that "Lewis was conservative culturally, morally and politically" and cites two instances in support of this assertion: firstly Lewis's joking comment to his brother that he wished someone would start a 'Stagnation Party' which he could support and, secondly, his response to an offer of membership in a Society for the Prevention of Progress, of which he felt he had been "born a member". Although both these examples are humorous in nature and are, furthermore, narrowly focused on the issue of 'progress', West's contention of Lewis's general conservatism would be borne out by anyone who has a wide acquaintance with his work. But Lewis's rejection of the belief in progress cannot simplistically be taken as evidence of either anti-modernism or postmodernism. Wain (1979) provides an in-depth critical analysis of Lewis's attitudes in this regard.

If, as Wain (1979) contends he should have, Lewis had paid more attention to the modern age, he might thereby have escaped some of the taint of reactionary conservatism with which he can, perhaps justly, be charged (as in Wilson, 1991). An example, which in itself may be trivial, provides some insight into this aspect of Lewis's outlook: he argues that zip fasteners, "while they last", save the wearer "an infinitesimal amount of time and trouble" but have a "much more solid merit" for the producer in that they do not last long (Lewis, 1965:112). While there might have been some justification for this comment in the quality of zip fasteners at the time which Lewis wrote, one detects here a resistance to change which

goes beyond only the rejection of modernist faith in progress and which might have left the human race permanently in the Stone Age if it had been consistently applied as social policy. To the issue of zip fasteners can be added the much more important question of the position of women in society. Some of Lewis's statements in this regard were sufficient to move a female disciple of Lewis (Lindskoog, 1994) to accuse the editor of Lewis's work of having altered the text of what Lewis had written by incorporating negative comments about women. It must be noted that this assertion forms part of a much wider polemic by Lindskoog against Walter Hooper and, furthermore, the whole question of Lewis's position regarding women is much more complex than might appear on a first reading of some of what he wrote. (This question deserves to be taken up in more detail as part of a discussion of Lewis which does bear some relation to postmodernism. It is touched on in Chapter Seven but is, however, largely beyond the scope of this thesis.) But, in contrast to examples in which Lewis seems to display elements of a hidebound conservatism, it will be shown later that there is little which Lewis has in common either with the jingoist 'Old Right' of Britain's imperial period or with the 'New Right' of Thatcher and Reagan and their political progeny in the 1990s. But, before proceeding with an analysis of the complex and seemingly paradoxical position of Lewis with regard to conservatism, liberalism and radical socialism, it is important in the context of this study to establish the relevance of this endeavour to the question of the alleged postmodernism of Lewis.

The vexed nature of the evaluation of Lewis in this regard is highlighted by two different sets of events at Cambridge University. The first relates to Lewis's inaugural lecture and concerns his self-proclaimed conservatism on that occasion. The second, almost forty years later, and thirty years after the death of Lewis, concerns the controversy which surrounded the award in 1992 of an honorary degree to Jacques Derrida, who must be regarded as the doyen of 'deconstructive' postmodernism. This latter dispute is used in introducing the work of Derrida by Collins (1996). Collins lists the four senior members of the University, who objected to Derrida's nomination, as Henry Erskine-Hill, Reader in Literary History; Ian Jack, Professor of English Literature; David Hugh Mellor, Professor of History; and

Raymond Ian Page, Bosworth Professor of Anglo-Saxon. What is striking about the positions held by these academics is that three of the four relate to the field of language and literature in which CS Lewis was deeply professionally involved and the fourth, philosophy, was an area in which Lewis maintained a continuing interest. In itself this is not enough to extrapolate to what the position of Lewis might have been four decades after his death. But Collins (1996:7) comments that "Cambridge traditionalists in both disciplines saw Derrida's thinking as deeply improper, offensive and subversive". He goes on (Collins, 1996:8) to quote, for example, a statement by Mellor in an anti-Derrida flysheet distributed in the course of the dispute:

"These are absurd doctrines with dismaying implications ... They deprive the mind of its defences against dangerously irrational ideologies and regimes."

These words could easily have been written by Lewis. They parallel fairly closely comments in his essays 'On ethics' and 'The poison of subjectivism' (Lewis, 1981c; 1981d) and, even though Lewis's comments are directed against a somewhat different target, they could equally well be turned towards a way of theorising which undermines rationality and objective truth at least as much as the subjectivism which was his concern. And if Mellor is to be regarded as a Cambridge traditionalist, then how much more would Lewis be deserving of this designation. For it was Lewis who took the occasion of his inaugural lecture at Cambridge to describe himself as "Old Western Man, his attitudes dating from before Freud, before modern art or poetry" (Wain, 1979:72) and to compare himself with Neanderthal Man or a dinosaur. Given the nature of Lewis's stand on rationality and objectivism, it can only be concluded that his principles provide a basis for a rejection of Derrida which would be at least as strong as that by the 'Cambridge traditionalists' thirty years after his death. Wain (1979) offers the opinion that, even four decades earlier, Lewis's flaunting of his traditionalism would not have been well received within the Cambridge academic community. But, despite the conclusion that some of the most deeply engrained principles of Lewis's thought would spontaneously issue in a revulsion against the perspectivism and anti-foundationalism of Derrida's work, it will be argued later in this

thesis that at another, perhaps more significant level, there are points of contact between the thought of Lewis and that of Derrida. To some degree these parallel the points of contact between Lewis's conservatism and other, radical social perspectives, to which we must now return.

The conservative nature of Lewis's thought might be argued on the basis of a number of different aspects (Wilson, 1991) and if some would attach the label 'radical' to Lewis it might most often only be in the sense of accusing him of being radically reactionary. Before this issue of Lewis and radicalism is addressed, another instance of Lewis's conservatism will be taken as the opportunity to throw light on his position in general. The controversy conducted between Lewis and Norman Pittenger (Lewis, 1987b) was more than a difference between two personalities of opposed temperaments. Rather, it represented the wider clash between theological liberalism, in the person of Pittenger, and Lewis as the embodiment of traditionalist Christian conservatism. The typical issues of the liberal-conservative debate are revealed in this dispute, beginning with question of miracles as the touchstone of the liberal attack on traditional Christian thought. Lewis's theological conservatism will be returned to later in this chapter but the controversy with Pittenger serves at this point to lead us on to a more general consideration of the conservatism of Lewis. It is stated above that Lewis is seen here as the embodiment of conservatism. This characterisation of Lewis could be regarded as somewhat overdrawn, and so, before we return to the substantive issue of Lewis's conservatism, it will be of benefit to the present argument to consider to what extent the depiction of Lewis as the archetypical conservative may be excessive. Wain (1979) accuses Lewis himself of this very kind of overstatement in describing himself as a 'dinosaur', one of the last living specimens of 'Old Western Man'. Instead, Wain discerns in Lewis a retreat, from the radical nineteen twenties of his youth, into the mindset of the pre-1914, Edwardian Age of his childhood. It would be foolish to reject Wain's thesis altogether - after all, there is much psychological theory which would support the claim that no human being can fully escape the formative experience of his or her early years. But, both in terms of the sociology of knowledge as propounded by Berger (1970), and of postmodern

'textuality' (eg West, 1996) in the understanding of human life which derives from Derrida, we may raise reservations regarding Wain's view of Lewis. Wain argues that Lewis retreated from the contemporary social scene and lived, at least partly, in a world constructed from his 'reading' of that which existed in his youth. But if this can be the case then why not in a world constructed from his understanding of the pre-Enlightenment or pre-Renaissance eras; and in what way would this diverge in form (if not content) from the common situation of human life? In the type of withdrawal which Wain describes, the person constructs an alternate reality through drawing on experiences other than those which currently contribute to the perceptions of people in society in general. In the field of modern psychology the condition of paranoia has been viewed as a particularly pathological instance of this (Edwards, 1987), and in Marxist theory the more broadly based notion of 'false consciousness' is similar in nature (Hawkes, 1996).

But, to return to the implications of the sociology of knowledge and of the understanding of 'textuality', all of what we regard as 'our' understandings, opinions and attitudes may be interpreted as the product of processes external to 'ourselves'. In the case of textuality, and the deconstructionist understanding which is explored in the next chapter, the consciousness of the human subject is reduced to the point of intersection of the linguistic discourses within which the person is situated while, in Berger's understanding of the sociology of knowledge, the influence of the social context operates in a very similar way. Lewis's experience was, as he himself stated (Lewis, 1985a, 1987c), largely constituted by his reading of the books of previous ages, and much of the balance of his experience involved interaction with friends whose interests were similarly inclined. If the discourse within which Lewis was situated was largely that of the authors of the classical or medieval eras, there is, therefore, on the basis of these linguistic and sociological theories, no reason why Lewis's thought might not be formed by these influences as much as by a self-conscious appropriation of the Edwardian era. It is only from the perspective of the liberal, modern worldview, with its axiomatic ideal of the autonomy and creative originality of the human self, that this would be regarded as somehow pathological. As will become clear later, from

other perspectives as well as Lewis's, it is obvious that the 'materials' for the construction of one's attitudes and one's self must be derived from somewhere, and this means from some or other social context. Whether that social context is limited to one's present situation in time, or transcends it, has no bearing on the fact of the social construction of one's apprehension of reality. Indeed, Lewis's concern with the negative effects of the 'Spirit of the Age' (Lewis, 1977) underlines his point that, only by opening oneself to the broad historical span of human thought, can one escape the constraints of the formative influence of one's present limited social situation. Furthermore, the weakness of the a-historicity of the modern notion of the autonomous human subject has been revealed by the work of Gadamer (1975) on the crucial role of tradition in human understanding. A similar note is sounded by Paul Ricoeur: "A human discovers his finitude in the fact that, first of all, he finds himself within a tradition or traditions" (quoted on the title-page of McGrath, 1990). In his article in praise of the reading of 'old books', Lewis (1985a) explicitly recognises all of this. He consequently sought to have his own perspective determined by immersion in the discourse of previous ages. Therefore, despite the melodramatic exaggeration alleged by Wain, Lewis could well be regarded as representative of 'Old Western Man'. His conservatism would, in an important sense, be more thorough-going than that envisaged by Wain.

1.4 Difficulties in categorising Lewis

The traditionalism of Lewis, as noted earlier in the quotation from West (1998), applies across the broad spectrum of human life, but if we were to work from a stereotypical concept of conservatism we would find Lewis to be very perplexing. In the socio-political sphere, Lewis's aversion to revolution and his advocacy of the principle of gradual change (Lewis 1982b), marks him clearly as conservative. But his insistence on freedom as an essential principle of social and political life, and his passionate rejection of religious compulsion (Lewis, 1986d; 1987d), might qualify him equally as liberal, albeit a conservative liberal. On the other hand, his defence of democracy and the principle of equality (Lewis, 1986a), is made on the basis of an explicit rejection of liberal notions of

the essentially positive, or at least morally neutral character of human nature: to Rousseau's notion that democracy is necessary because "mankind [is] so wise and good that everyone deserved a share in government" Lewis responds that democracy must be upheld rather on the grounds that "mankind is so fallen that no man can be trusted with unchecked power over his fellows" (Lewis, 1986a:17). Gamble (1981) does make the point that conservative liberalism did come to adopt a very negative evaluation of human nature, but Lewis parts company with liberalism in another direction by holding up as a social ideal, not only legal equality, but also economic equality (Lewis 1986a). More recently this position has seemingly been jettisoned even by some professed socialists as being too radical! His deep scepticism about the capitalist economy is revealed even in his most popularly-directed work (Lewis, 1955) when he comments on the baleful nature of the controlling role of men of power within the economy. In Lewis's mind there was no picture of blind but benign 'market forces' any more than there was in Marx's when he fulminated against the *Grand Bourgeoisie*. It must be added that it is at points like this that Lewis's radicalism and his traditional, supernaturalist Christianity make contact: he was one with St Augustine in the belief that every earthly event has its spiritual counterpart (Versfeld, 1990), and the machinations of market forces could hardly escape, in his mind, the implication of the demonic 'Lower Command' (Lewis, 1965b). Adding further to an image of a radical Lewis, is his bitterly critical attack on the inhumanities of colonialism and on the arrogance and smug moralism of European imperialism (Lewis, 1975a; 1981g). Unlike the rightwing English Tories, with whom many of his critics would identify him, Lewis had no sympathy whatsoever for the Apartheid regime in South Africa: alongside other undesirable situations, including that of "a Jew in Hitler's Germany", Lewis includes "an African in Malan's Africa" (Lewis, 1981g:161). In the immediate post-World War II era in which he wrote, Lewis's anti-colonial position, as expressed in the statement that "all over the earth the White Man's offence 'smells to heaven'", was not yet as fashionable generally in Western intellectual circles as it was later to become. In another reference to the history of European colonialism, in his consideration of the religious implications of the possible existence of life elsewhere in the universe, the radicalism of Lewis (1975a) is even more startling: he

expresses the hope that, if ever human pioneers in space should come into contact with other intelligent beings, they would 'very properly' be destroyed before they inflict, on these alien beings, the miseries perpetrated on their own flesh and blood on earth. The parallel with the slogan 'one settler, one bullet' in the recent history of the liberation struggle in South Africa is unmistakable. It should not be surprising, then, that the conservative Lewis, who could at the same time be the radical Lewis, should be open to identification also as the postmodern Lewis, without this aligning him in any way with the 'right' postmodernism described by Cupitt (1998). As will be demonstrated later in this thesis, the neo-conservative drive to establish unshakeable fundamentals, in the face of the dissolution of old certainties, was a project towards which Lewis would have been, at the very least, ambivalent.

If we turn from the social and political field to religion, we find a somewhat different situation. Lewis's conservatism is very clearly reflected in the religious sphere, as is evident in his attack on Bultmann (Lewis, 1975b). He describes himself as being untouched by modernist reservations about religion, specifically with regard to aspects such as the miraculous (Lewis, 1981d). He is absolutely unambiguous with regard to the Christian tradition's central commitment to historicity and supernaturalism:

"On certain great events (those embodied in the creeds) we have what I believe to be divine comment which makes plain so much of their significance as we need, and can bear, to know" (Lewis, 1975:63).

Here we have the reason for the antipathy of theological liberals, such as Pittenger. It was the cause of considerable discomfort for one so publicly recognised as a representative of Christianity to nail his colours to the mast on matters such as miracles and the authority of the Ecumenical Councils of the Church. It cut across all the attempts of the theological liberals to present a re-interpretation of Christianity which would be in tune with the worldview of the modern age. Towards their discomfort Lewis could at times display some sympathy (Lewis, 1966) but without any retreat from his theological position whatsoever.

In an address to priests and youth-leaders of the Church of Wales, Lewis (1987c:16) set two criteria which the Christian apologist should naturally ask himself, and then adds a further comment. Because of what it reveals about Lewis's conservatism and traditionalism it will be reproduced in detail:

"Have I been 'keeping up', keeping abreast of recent movements in theology? [and] Have I *stood firm* ... amidst all these 'winds of doctrine'? I want to say emphatically that the second question is far the more important of the two. Our upbringing and the whole atmosphere of the world we live in make it certain that our main temptation will be that of yielding to winds of doctrine, not that of ignoring them. We are not at all likely to be hidebound: we are very likely indeed to be the slaves of fashion. If one has to choose between reading the new books and reading the old, one must choose the old: not because they are necessarily better but because they contain precisely those truths of which our age is neglectful. The standard of permanent Christianity must be kept clear in our minds and it is against that standard that we must test all contemporary thought. In fact we must at all costs *not* move with the times. We serve One who said, 'Heaven and Earth shall move with the times, but my words shall not move with the times'".

If we consider his social conservatism in general, this side of Lewis can be set against the radical inclinations which have already been described but, within the context of Christian theology, the picture of Lewis remains solidly conservative. No doubt the liberals, whom he opposed so publicly and so vehemently, saw in his posture the theological equivalent of his rejection of zip fasteners. But the case which Lewis (1975b) presents against the biblical criticism of Bultmann, for example, is based on carefully marshalled evidence of the flaws in the approach of the liberals. These include, in Bultmann's case, his misunderstanding of the nature of different literary forms, including the key one of 'myth'; and his failure to recognise the effect which his use of series of linked hypotheses had on the statistical validity of his conclusions. Elsewhere, Lewis (1960) points out crucial flaws in the anti-supernaturalist philosophy espoused by liberal theology. It is obviously possible to differ theologically from Lewis, and many would wish to go further in questioning the validity of some of his arguments on religious issues (eg Griffiths, 1979), but it is not possible to argue that Lewis's theological position is merely an expression of his prejudice. In Lewis we encounter a very tightly presented case for a traditional view of Christianity which is

recognised as such from positions as different as that of Evangelicals such as James Dobson and Billy Graham (see eg Root, 1998; Lewis 1990b), Eastern Orthodox such as Bishop Kallistos Ware (see Ware, 1979), and Catholics including Cardinal Ratzinger and Pope John-Paul II (Harper, 1997; Ratzinger, 2000). There is yet a further apparent paradox: although it is in his socio-political thought that Lewis can be demonstrated to display a seemingly paradoxical blend of conservatism and radicalism, it is in his more specifically religious and theological thought that we find the affinities of Lewis with postmodernism which will be traced in this study. Here the apparent paradox is even more acute: on the one side the religious and theological aspects of Lewis's thought are the most unambiguously conservative; on the other there exists an association of these with a radical mode of thought - and this is the radicalism of Cupitt's 'left' postmodernism, not the neo-conservatism of 'right' postmodernism. It will be shown in the next chapter that, in its wider sense, the radicalism of postmodern theory is open to question, but what cannot be contested is the radical challenge which postmodernism poses to ways of thinking which have been accepted as true within modernity. The task here is to trace the connections between this 'radicalism' and Lewis's conservative role as exponent of tradition. What this meant to him was twenty centuries of tradition extending back beyond the five centuries of history of his own Anglican Communion through the medieval Church, the great Ecumenical Councils of the undivided Church and the Church Fathers to its source in the Apostolic Church and in the Person of Jesus Christ (Lewis, 1955).

1.5 The case of Karl Barth and its significance for the position of CS Lewis

At this point some comparisons with the theology of Karl Barth may be instructive. It has already been argued that Lewis's is not a neo-conservative postmodernism. Barth, on the other hand, is widely recognised as the founder of 'Neo-Orthodoxy'. Jenson (1989:25) observes that, in the late 1950s, when Barth had reached the height of his fame and when "the general tenor of his views should have been widely known", there were attracted to the University of Basle,

"American students from the 'evangelical wing', who had pilgrimaged there on the impression that his thought was a 'conservative' reaction to modernism. English and North American theologians from the opposite pole have had the same impression with different evaluation; Barth has been routinely denounced as a theological reactionary, who tried to save the faith from the acids of modernity by locating it in a sealed compartment of biblicistically revealed truth."

Jenson makes the comment in this regard that, in the English-speaking parts of the church he is "commonly supposed to be a sort of throwback, perhaps to the seventeenth century" but contrary to this opinion asserts that Barth's thought is pervasively determined by the Western church's continuing attempt to come to terms with the 'Enlightenment'. Jenson is uncertain if there is "such a thing as postmodernism" but, if so,

"Barth may be its only major theological representative so far, for his work is a vast attempt to transcend not only the Enlightenment but also 'modern' Protestantism's defining way of making that attempt" (Jenson, 1989:25).

Jenson here may be guilty of ignoring the explicitly developed postmodernism of Mark C Taylor (Taylor, 1982; 1984), and he also differs from McGrath (1994) who identifies Jurgen Moltman and Eberhard Jungel as representative postmodern theologians who have come to grips with and transcended the legacy of the 'Enlightenment'. The best resolution of this question may be provided by the comment by Kung (1995:198) that Barth "is really an initiator, indeed the main initiator, of a 'postmodern' paradigm in theology" but that he "is an initiator and not a perfecter of such a paradigm". But if Barth is the initiator of a line of postmodern theology that perhaps goes on to include Moltmann and Jungel, he is most definitely opposed to the 'a/theology' of Mark C Taylor, which is inspired by Derrida's postmodernism. To Cupitt (1997; 1998), who similarly takes his cue from Derrida, Barth would probably fall into the category of neo-conservative 'right' postmodernism but, as Jenson makes clear, this judgement would be superficial and erroneous. Barth's was not a desperate neo-conservatism which, in supporting slipping foundations, blindly set up new certainties in their absence. Barth would have had no hesitation in denouncing that endeavour as idolatry, for his own project involved the demolition of the very same kind of human certainties, even though these were those of nineteenth century liberalism, and its

'Enlightenment' heritage, rather than of a neo-conservative traditionalism. Theologically conservative critics of Barth attack his connection with existentialism, for example Zens (1976) highlights Barth's statement of his indebtedness to Kierkegaard in the preface to his commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, and Schaeffer (1968:50) complains that "the same general picture that emerges from secular existentialism is present in Karl Barth's system". It could be argued that these critics do not recognise the differences which drove Barth apart from the other 'dialectical theologians' including Bultmann and Tillich, or the changes in Barth's thinking over the decades, but this is immaterial to the point of the association of Barth with existentialism. If we use Cupitt's terms, Barth's association is with the 'left' rather than the 'right'. And, while the rise of deconstructive postmodernism in the second half of the twentieth century may have usurped the place which existentialism held until past mid-century, there is much commonality between the two ways of thinking in their reaction against the optimistic certainties of the humanism of 'Enlightenment' modernism. The case for Barth to be regarded as a 'right' postmodernist is not one that can stand close scrutiny: his work cannot be seen simply as another instance of the attempt at a re-institution of some part of the of the old, 'golden' past, appropriated for the present and thereby inevitably transmuted. The evaluations of Kung and Jenson have more to recommend them in this regard than any facile conclusion based on the postmodern scenario depicted by Cupitt.

Jenson (1989:46) sums up his evaluation of the theological edifice, which Barth erected to replace the Protestant liberalism from which he had turned his face, with these words:

"As Barth reversed the pattern of neo-Protestantism, inquiring not into Jesus' place in our story but into our place in his, he created the first Western Christological metaphysics on an intellectual and spiritual par with the magnificent Eastern creations of Gregory Nazianzus or the Confessor Maximus. The *Church Dogmatics* is in fact a huge doctrine of being, which offends against the previous tradition of Western thought by putting an individual, the risen Jesus Christ, at the Ground of reality."

This quote is pregnant with issues which must be followed up in later chapters of this dissertation: Barth's divergence not just from the liberal Protestant version of modernism but

from the Western intellectual tradition in general; the association of the postmodern Barth with the Eastern Christian theological tradition; and the questions of metaphysics and of the personal as the 'Ground of reality'. It is unfortunate that Jenson reveals his own Western intellectual formation in using the term 'individual' rather than 'person' in referring to Christ. This obscures somewhat his own intentions in this passage as well as another aspect of a link with the Christian East which he does not make explicit but which is implied in his conclusion that Barth's is a "decisively trinitarian theology, after centuries in which trinitarianism was in Western reflection a problem rather than a resource" (Jenson, 1989:46-47). Lossky (1976), in his classic account of *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, is emphatic about the crucial importance of the associated motifs of Person and Trinity in Eastern theology. Eastern theology is also a 'decisively trinitarian theology'! As we proceed, part of the thrust of the present study will be seen to involve a threeway association between the postmodern, the thought of CS Lewis and the theology of Eastern Christianity. What has been suggested here for Karl Barth is applicable in the case of CS Lewis also. Lewis cannot be dismissed by labelling him 'neo-conservative'. His traditionalism, much more so than for Barth, must be recognised and taken into account but, as for Barth, it will be argued that Lewis has engaged the issues raised by modern thought and in consequence may be regarded as offering a truly postmodern alternative. In Barth's case the association which Jenson makes between his theology and Eastern Christianity is a matter of perception, not organic connection. In contrast, Lewis's achievement reflects the way he drew on the resources of the Eastern Christian tradition, amongst other sources, to address a postmodern challenge as yet unnamed in his day. The nature of that challenge forms the substance of the following chapter.

PART II

CS LEWIS AND POSTMODERNISM I

CHAPTER 2
CHARTING THE POSTMODERN

CHAPTER 3
PREMODERN, MODERN AND POSTMODERN: ISSUES IN THE USE
OF TERMS

CHAPTER 4
THE EASTERN CHRISTIAN AND THE QUESTION OF THE
POSTMODERN

CHAPTER 5
IDENTIFYING ASPECTS OF THE POSTMODERN IN THE WORK OF
CS LEWIS

CHAPTER TWO

CHARTING THE POSTMODERN

2.1 Prophets of postmodernism?

If we are to consider the claim that CS Lewis can be regarded as a 'prophet' of postmodernism, it must be recognised that prior claim has already been laid to that title on behalf of Friedrich Nietzsche. Two recent authors, Tarnas (1996) and Robinson (1999), explicitly mention the name of Nietzsche with reference to the role of prophet in the context of discussions of postmodernism. At the end of his review of the development of Western thought over a period of almost three thousand years, from its roots in pre-Socratic Greece and ancient Israel to the present, Tarnas portrays the current state of disarray and, indeed, collapse of modern thought. A decade and a half earlier, Gamble (1981) described the scepticism and loss of confidence which had already clearly developed within the West with regard to the whole range of modern thought. But Tarnas writes lyrically of Nietzsche as the prophet of this end of an era:

"Each great epochal transformation in the history of the Western mind appears to have been initiated by a kind of archetypal sacrifice. As if to consecrate the birth of a fundamental new cultural vision, in each case a symbolically resonant trial and martyrdom of some sort was suffered by its central prophet: thus the trial and execution of Socrates at the birth of the classical Greek mind, the trial and crucifixion of Jesus at the birth of Christianity, and the trial and condemnation of Galileo at the birth of modern science. By all accounts the central prophet of the postmodern mind was Friedrich Nietzsche, with his radical perspectivism, his sovereign critical sensibility, and his powerful, poignantly ambivalent anticipation of the emerging nihilism in Western culture. And we see a curious, perhaps aptly postmodern analogy of this theme of archetypal sacrifice and martyrdom with the extraordinary inner trial and imprisonment - the intense intellectual ordeal the extreme psychological isolation, and the eventually paralysing madness - suffered at the birth of the postmodern by Nietzsche, who signed his last letters 'The Crucified', and who died at the dawn of the twentieth century." (Tarnas, 1996:395)

While it might be objected that Tarnas indulges here in poetic excess, the much more prosaic account of Nietzsche's work by Robinson presents a very similar assessment regarding Nietzsche's relationship to postmodernism to that which Tarnas offers:

"Nietzsche knew that he was a prophet. ... He always thought he was writing for a more appreciative future audience, and described himself as a 'posthumous' philosopher. So, one hundred years later, perhaps we are that audience and he is the first great postmodernist" (Robinson, 1999:4)

The guardedness, which distinguishes Robinson's assessment from that of Tarnas, is evident in his use of 'perhaps'. The back-cover blurb to his book offers the conclusion that Robinson "thinks that Nietzsche is a postmodernist but he is not sure". The reservations which Robinson holds in this regard relate partly to the lack of coherence which marks Nietzsche's philosophising. He comments that "it rather looks as if Nietzsche can be made into a postmodernist, but only if you ignore much of his later work" (Robinson, 1999:61). The important question, though, is not whether Nietzsche 'can be made into a postmodernist'. That effort would be very likely amount to little more than an intellectual and semantic game. The question which must be asked is whether, in what ways, and to what degree, the thought of Nietzsche pre-figured postmodern thought. The term 'prophet', although it might seem a little overstated, has the merit of drawing attention to the way in which ideas, which were to attain general currency at a later date, were first expressed at an earlier point in time. It is the contention of this study that not only Nietzsche, but also CS Lewis, are figures who fulfilled this type of 'prophetic' role. It must be admitted that the case of Lewis is less clear-cut than that of Nietzsche, especially in view of the fact that Lewis was only beginning his life when Nietzsche's was drawing to its close. The debate around this will form an important part of the substance of this thesis, but at this point the question of Nietzsche's relationship to postmodernism will be pursued a little further, in the hope that it will provide some elucidation by analogy when we proceed to our consideration of Lewis. In Tarnas's eulogy to Nietzsche as the prophet of postmodernism, he identifies the marks of that prophetic role as threefold: a radical perspectivism, a 'sovereign' critical sensibility, and an anticipation of emerging Western nihilism. Robinson (1999) extends these further in his

account of Nietzsche's rejection of any transcendent reality, his anti-foundationalism, his scepticism regarding the relationship of logic to truth and of language to reality, his 'demolition' of science, and his denial of the doctrines of progress and the substantiality of the human self. All of these, as well as others, will demand detailed discussion as we proceed, but they are an impressive indication of the prescient nature of Nietzsche's observations of the nature and fate of modern thought, at a point when it was at its most triumphant. To this extent the attribution of the title of 'prophet of postmodernism' would seem to be justified in the case of Nietzsche, whether or not we are prepared to accede to Tarnas's somewhat baroque development of this idea. The characteristic features of postmodernism, which writers such as Tarnas and Robinson identify, will require further detailed discussion, preparatory to the scrutiny of the work of CS Lewis for evidence in support of the contention that he too may be considered to be a prophet of postmodernism. Nietzsche was situated historically at the very dawn of the postmodern, if not before it but Lewis's intellectual life spanned the historical boundary-line of 1914 which, as will be shown, may be regarded as a crucial date in the emergence of the postmodern. Therefore the position of Lewis must be understood in the context of the development of postmodernism and the use of this term, as well as his association with tradition.

2.2 Origins and development: postmodernism and postmodernity

"The simple truth is that there were many modernisms" - this is the starting-point which Bradbury (1995:35) chooses in order to launch into his synopsis of postmodernism. On the nature of 'the modern', he continues by noting that,

"the movements of modernism - which almost never called themselves modernist - maintained constant hostilities, espoused different ideologies, served under different flags. But over time the term 'modernism' became a handy compendium, a way of pulling discrepancies together, perceiving a direction not always apparent to any given participant."

Bradbury goes on to observe that, in view of this plural nature of modernism, it is natural to expect a "similarly eclectic and disputed history" in the case of postmodernism. Indeed,

one must add that the positions of major postmodern theorists, such as Jacques Derrida and Jean-Francois Lyotard requires just such a plurality of theory. This multiplicity of postmodernisms is an issue which must be discussed in detail as we proceed, as this is obviously significant in an evaluation of the work of CS Lewis in terms of postmodernism. The obvious question which must be asked in this undertaking must be, 'According to what kind of postmodernism or postmodernisms is Lewis's thought to be considered and evaluated?'. Prior to this, though, it will be illuminating to consider briefly the history to which Bradbury refers, as well as to highlight the theoretical plurality which has been implicated as inherent in the use of the term 'postmodern'.

An aura of modishness has come to attend postmodernism, as the dominant paradigm in intellectual circles, in the last couple of decades of the Twentieth Century. At the beginning of the Nineteen-Eighties, Gamble (1981) had already observed that the ideologies of modernity were shorter on believers in the West than its traditional religions. It was, perhaps, the symbolism of the breaking down of the 'Berlin Wall' which finally precipitated the eclipse of the various forms of neo-Marxism, which had been the preferred position of radically inclined intellectuals, and led to the ascendancy of postmodernism in theoretical circles in the closing decade of the Second Millennium. But that eclipse had been long in developing. The Romantic movement had taken an anti-modernist stand more than a century earlier (Webb, 1971); two centuries earlier if we date it from Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Aeschliman (1998:282) comments with regard to the Romanticism of the Nineteenth Century that it "created an anti-modernist literature of enduring power ... [which] was to exercise a profound influence on Twentieth Century critics of modernity" - amongst whom he includes CS Lewis. There is, however, an important semantic distinction between 'anti-' and 'post-' relationships to a phenomenon. To be postmodern implies a sense of having passed over from opposing to overcoming modernism. The inherent theoretical difficulty in this notion of the 'overcoming' of modernity is noted by Snyder (1988) in his introduction to Vattimo's *End of Modernity*, but this is an issue to which we will have to return later. Anti-modernism, though, might amount to little more than a resentful nostalgia

for the premodern past. Thus, while self-conscious anti-modernism can be traced back over two centuries, Bradbury (1995) places postmodernism in the fifty-year period following the Second World War up to the time of his writing. On the other hand, Breisach (1994) points out the watershed which the 1914-1918 War presented for the self-confident modernity of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the same vein, Kung (1995) identifies Karl Barth as the initiator of the postmodern paradigm in theology, and links the origin of Barth's postmodernism to the devastating effect that the events of 1914 had on Barth's earlier liberal modernism. But, whatever the validity of Kung's attribution of postmodernism to Barth, the term itself was not to come into general use for almost another two generations. However, we will see, in a further section of this chapter, and in more detail in Chapter Seven, that there were other currents of incipient postmodernism predating Barth and leading in directions very different from both the Christian thought of Barth and the anti-Christian thought of Nietzsche. This other variety, of 'affirmative postmodernism', is intimately involved in the personal history of CS Lewis and will be given special attention in Part III of this thesis.

With regard to the use of the term 'postmodernism' itself, Bradbury (1995:36) names the Nineteen-Fifties as the time when it first started to "acquire some degree of literary and artistic currency". But the understanding of postmodernism at this time was not so much a matter of disillusionment with the optimism of the ideology of humanism and progress, as in the case of Barth as well as in much contemporary postmodernism. Rather, according to Bradbury, it was constituted by a mixture of a further development of modernity together with a transformation of the pre-war *avant garde* spirit, which reflected the emerging mass consumer society. Bradbury (1995:36) cites an essay written in 1959, concerning 'mass society and post-modern fiction', by the literary critic Irving Howe, which dealt with,

"the angry, displaced critical writing that is born of 'a relatively comfortable, half welfare and half garrison society in which the population grows passive, indifferent and atomised' - an affluent, conformist America where the individual seems superfluous, the outsider rages and the dominant culture seems hostile".

Barth's disillusionment with modern humanism, and Howes's concern with mass consumer society, both continue to resonate in contemporary postmodernism but, as Bradbury goes on to point out, the term came to be used with different references in the following decades. Thus the Catholic scholar, Josef Pieper, writing at the end of the Nineteen-Fifties, clearly has a different sense of 'postmodern' in mind from that which it gained from the writings of the French theorists of a decade or two later, with whom Robinson (1999) largely identifies contemporary postmodernism. In his book, *Scholasticism*, Pieper (1960:22) expresses the opinion that "a new segment of man's history began concurrently with the Middle Ages, but has not ended with the end of the medieval era". He goes on to suggest that this 'segment', of which the Middle Ages was the initial period, has "continued into postmedieval times and into the present 'postmodern' era, and will doubtless continue beyond". Murray (1964), a Jesuit contemporary of Pieper, uses a distinction between the modern and the postmodern as a key criterion in his treatment of *The Problem of God: Yesterday and Today*. He forthrightly sets Marx along with Nietzsche as the embodiment of the postmodern attitude to God. In contrast to the modernism of the 'Enlightenment', which adopted a disdainful and even condescending stance towards God, as a 'hypothesis which is no longer required', the postmodernism described by Murray regards God, even if it is in his non-existence, as a deadly adversary to be combated. As Bradbury indicates, since Pieper's and Murray's time, ways of thinking have become established which have invested the term with added and altered meanings. Not least among the effects of these would be the objection to the idea, implicit in Pieper's phrasing, that the medieval period of Western European history, and its aftermath, constitute a universal stage in 'man's history'. But, notwithstanding the current proclivity of some writers to refer to 'the end of history' (Robinson, 1999; Sim, 1999), Pieper's conjecture that the medieval, modern and postmodern might share more than divides them, may yet prove to have merit. For the present, though, what is important are the variations in the senses in which the term 'postmodern' is used.

The terms 'modern' and 'postmodern', and their derivatives, do present some difficulty in their usage, and in addressing this Hargreaves (1994) suggests that it is useful to distinguish

between postmodernity, as a condition of society, and postmodernism as a kind of theorising which is one of the manifestations but, in Hargreaves's opinion, not the only one, and not a necessary one, of postmodernity. Reference was made earlier to the contested nature of postmodernism as an 'overcoming' of the modern worldview but, with regard to postmodernity, the challenge of the postmodern to modernity, at the level of the life of society, has made its effects increasingly felt on many aspects of modern society from the mid-twentieth century onwards. Science, as one of the pillars of modernity, has lost its previous hallowed position (eg see Chalmers, 1991). And this loss of faith in science is reflected in such diverse phenomena as the rise of 'alternative' medicine and of the environmental movement. The burgeoning interest in Asian spirituality and religion, (Bosch, 1991) and the growth of new religious movements outside of, but also within Christianity (Steyn, 1994), is taken as further evidence of postmodernity in a society previously characterised as increasingly secular. But, despite its utility, Hargreaves' distinction between society and modes of thought is difficult to sustain when one shifts away from abstraction. The challenge of the postmodern affects both society and theory in a complex interaction between theoretical discourse and social process. With regard to this study, the challenge to modern Christianity operates at the levels of institutional religion and religious life, as well as that of theology and social theory. For example, the challenge posed to the churches of the modern West by changed social conditions, in which modern organisational forms and ways of functioning have become a liability, are discussed by Frost (1996). In his treatment of the topic there are many parallels with contemporary industrial organisation and management policy, which is another of the facets of modernity which is in flux with the onset of postmodernity. But, despite the difficulty of disentangling society and theory (or ideology, or theology, or worldview), this study focuses primarily on theory. Whatever the relation between postmodern theory and postmodern society, which in Hargreave's treatment of it seems to echo the Marxist view of the relationship of ideology to socio-economic base, there is a body of postmodern theory which is available to be read and considered in its own right. And the work of CS Lewis, which forms the primary research source of this study, is literary, philosophical and theological in nature, as well as

dealing with social theory. We must proceed, therefore, to a more detailed consideration of postmodernism as theory.

2.3 Postmodern Theory

Postmodernism, as a kind of theorising, is associated with the names of Nietzsche and Heidegger as its pioneers although Richard Rorty, the premier contemporary American postmodern theorist according to Robinson (1999), would add the name of John Dewey also (Snyder, 1988). With characteristic American optimism, Dewey's theories were constructed in the light of an evolutionism which looked to a future of continuing human adaptation, even though it might have avoided the idea of ongoing 'upward' progress which was the basis of most liberal use of the idea of evolution. This contrasts with the type of nihilism to be found in the two German philosophers but the implications of Dewey's work is similarly nihilistic, despite the way in which Dewey's positive emphasis might seem to make the attribution of nihilism inappropriate. In both, this nihilism consists in the shattering of the tradition of truth as understood, not only within Christian thought, but also in the modern thought which originated in the medieval Christian worldview. In the last decades of the twentieth century the names of theorists such as Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Jean-Francois Lyotard and Jean Baudrillard are amongst those most often associated with this breakdown of modern and Western thought, terms which Gamble (1981) argues are synonymous. While the influence and inspiration of Nietzsche broods heavily in the background of the work of these theorists (Robinson, 1999), their influence has also been achieved partly through the application of a structuralist and poststructuralist treatment of language based on Saussurian linguistics (Sturrock, 1979). The problematic nature of the relation of language to truth is a Nietzschean theme but the influence of de Saussure, a contemporary of Nietzsche, has joined with his to powerful effect in postmodern thought. An understanding of language as a system of signs which gain their meaning by their relation to each other, rather than to a reality behind the words, has been destructive of the tradition of philosophy which culminated in modern thought. But these theorists have pressed home the attack on modern thought in various ways: by stressing the surface nature

of the language, and the images, which are usually taken as representative of realities supposedly lying behind them; by the strategy of deconstruction which picks its way through the discourses to which systems of thought are reduced in postmodern thought, destabilising them by exposing their internal inconsistencies; by exposing the dynamics of power which operate in the claims to truth of bodies of knowledge and values; and by undermining and rejecting large-scale theories purporting to account for large tracts of reality, if not reality as a whole. It is possible to attribute each of these various emphases to one or more particular theorists but, in practice, these modes of calling into question the claims of modern thought, overlap and merge. Therefore, in Chapter Five, aspects of Lewis's thought will be analysed in a broad comparison with features of this nihilistic or sceptical postmodern theory, without referring in detail to the writings of particular theorists. This will contrast with the approach in Chapters Seven and Eight, where features of the thought of different authors of 'affirmative postmodernism' will be given specific and detailed attention, in view of the way that they touch on the positive content of the Christian thought of Lewis.

With regard to the nihilistic tradition of postmodernism, it is probably only from within modern Western thought, with its strong rationalist tendencies, that this iconoclastic activity is seen in the almost apocalyptic light in which it is sometimes understood. In the case of Eastern thought le Roux (1996a; 1997) traces similarities between Derrida and the early Buddhist thinker, Nagarjuna. And even within the Western tradition the impact of medieval mysticism, such as that of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, has not been insubstantial despite the subsequent dominance of rationalistic modernism in the West. But, within the Eastern Christian tradition, the emphasis on the failure of language to comprehend reality, and the necessity of the shattering of all symbols, never suffered the eclipse, (even though this was not total) which occurred in the West (Lossky, 1976; Behr-Sigel, 1992). The term 'West' here includes both Catholicism and Protestantism, as well as the anti- or non-Christian, modern culture which arose out of the Western Christian matrix from the Middle Ages onwards. In the context of this study the affinities with Eastern Orthodoxy evident in

Lewis's *Mere Christianity* (Lewis, 1955), and the way Lewis is quoted in Fr Kallistos Ware's *Orthodox Way* (Ware, 1979), offer some promise in the attempt to trace the outlines of postmodern Christian thinking in Lewis. The link with Eastern Christianity is significant in the light of what will be said later about the possibility that to have stood back from the development of modernity may provide the occasion for relevance in an age increasingly sceptical of the modern. But, before the relation between postmodern theory and the Christian thought of the Eastern tradition and of Lewis can be explored, there are further questions regarding postmodernism which need to be dealt with.

2.4 Beyond nihilism

In *The Passion of the Western Mind*, Tarnas (1996) traces the development of the Western intellectual tradition from its dual roots in Classical Greek and Christian thought, through the thought of figures such as Augustine, Aquinas, Bacon, Descartes, Locke, Hume and Kant, to its final crisis as the hopes of a triumphalist, secular humanism ended in thoroughgoing scepticism, as modern faith in human reason, science and progress dissolved. In this crisis the ambition of men to be as gods, in a world of which they would be masters, collapses in a nihilistic Babel. Snyder (1988), in introducing the postmodernism of Vattimo's *End of Modernity*, states that,

"European nihilism is inseparable from what is now usually referred to as the 'philosophy of difference', whose founders are Nietzsche and Heidegger. The philosophy of difference contends that all distinctions between truth and falsehood, essence and appearance, the rational and the irrational, must be dissolved, insofar as no ultimate guarantee or unshakeable ground of 'difference' (for example God) exists, outside or prior to our language and the concepts embedded in it, to whose authority we could appeal in order to make these distinctions in a strictly objective way."

The question of the role of the concept of God, and other putatively foundational 'presences' behind our language, is an extremely important one in the project of evaluating the position of CS Lewis in relation to postmodern theory. Payne (1988) uses the phrase 'Real Presence' to title her work on the worldview of CS Lewis and 'presence' is exactly the target of the deconstructive postmodern theorising of Derrida (eg Derrida, 1989). But, following Hart

(1989), it will be argued in Chapter Four that we may relinquish the concept of God as a metaphysical foundation for our philosophical constructions without thereby relinquishing our recognition of the reality of God. The assertion of the reality of the divine presence is crucial in the work of Lewis, and no consideration of Lewis's qualifications to be considered a 'prophet of postmodernism' can avoid this issue. There are, however, other affirmative strands which are to be detected in the 'end of modernity' which must be discussed first in relation to Tarnas's (1996) account of the emergence of the postmodern.

Tarnas does not leave his account of the Western mind at the point of nihilism. After a lucid and detailed account of the disintegration of modernism and the role of nihilistic postmodernism in relation to this, Tarnas concludes his monument to the development and collapse of modern thought with an impassioned affirmation of a positive reality lying beyond the 'end of modernity'. The affirmative or constructive alternative presented by Tarnas must be taken further a little later in this discussion but at this point it must be noted that, in passing from negation to affirmation, he follows the lead set by Nietzsche, who came to the point of desiring to reach beyond nihilism. Novak (1996:6) comments that Nietzsche sought to create "a new redemptive vision for a world in which the old God had died. It would revolve around the figure of the superman and his life-affirming, earth-embracing, despair-defying joyful wisdom." He wrote to a friend in August 1881, "I am filled with a new vision", and a little later, "I want to be at all times hereafter only an affirmer" (Novak, 1996:5). It seems that those who might loosely be called 'deconstructive postmodernists' have followed Nietzsche more in his scepticism than in his attempt at positive affirmation. In contrast, Degenaar (1996), in attempting to delineate the nature of postmodernity in contrast to modernity and premodernity, quotes Pauline Marie Rosenau who, similarly to Tarnas, takes up the dual theme of scepticism and affirmation, established by Nietzsche, in relation to contemporary postmodernism. Degenaar (1996:14) sums up her position by stating that Rosenau distinguishes between the sceptical and affirmative types of postmodernism as follows: sceptical postmodernisms are "said to emphasise radical uncertainty in such a way that it leads to despair" while affirmative postmodernisms are

"oriented to change and process, celebrate life and its pluralities, and are willing to make moral choices in spite of the complexity of the issues". Rosenau (1992:15-16) herself characterises affirmative postmodernists as follows:

"They are either open to positive political action (struggle and resistance) or content with the recognition of visionary, celebratory personal non-dogmatic projects that range from New Age religion to New Wave lifestyles and include a whole spectrum of postmodern social movements. Most affirmatives seek a philosophical and ontological intellectual practice that is non-dogmatic, tentative, and non-ideological."

She makes the point that affirmative postmodernists typically do not attempt to cloister themselves in relativistic philosophising cut off from action, but affirm a positive ethic, make normative choices and engage with specific social issues. Strong positions on community and environment are amongst the issues which Rosenau identifies as lying within the field of concern of affirmative postmodernists. While it will be shown in this thesis that this type of concern is not at all foreign to Lewis, it is "philosophical and ontological intellectual practice", and particularly religion, which will be given attention in the discussion of affirmative postmodernism in this thesis. This will be done in view of the focus of Lewis on these aspects and also in the light of the primary emphasis on the spiritual in Richard Tarnas's account of affirmative postmodernism.

One example of this type of affirmative postmodernism, which (as we will see) may differ markedly in tone from that of Tarnas, is to be found in Cupitt's treatment of religion in general (Cupitt, 1997) and mysticism in particular (Cupitt, 1998). Cupitt espouses the Nietzschean view in the form which Derrida developed in his deconstructive theorising, but he complements the void, which nihilism makes of the old Truth, with his own form of affirmative emphasis. The three elements of postmodern religion, as proposed by Cupitt (1997), are 'the Blissful Void', 'Solar Living' and 'the Eye of God'. Cupitt's 'Blissful Void' clearly owes much to Buddhism, a fact which is partly acknowledged by Cupitt himself when he offers a paraphrase of Buddhist teaching, assimilated to his own understanding:

"The more everything - including the self - is melted down into a silent outpouring of pure insubstantial secondariness (I call this 'the Fountain'), the happier we get to be."
(Cupitt, 1998:5)

The advertising slogan, 'What you see is what you get', is an apt description of Cupitt's deconstructionist understanding, in which there are no deeper realities, but only "pure insubstantial secondariness". All the 'reality' that there is, is to be had in direct experience itself. This is the point at which the nihilism of everything being "melted down" passes over into affirmation; hence the celebration of that experience in Cupitt's 'Solar' religion, for the sun's dynamic existence symbolises the good life commended by Cupitt:

"We should pour ourselves out as the sun does, identifying ourselves completely with the outpouring flux of all existence" (Cupitt, 1997:90).

In this religious vision there is no place for any presence 'behind the scenes', whether it is the presence of a realistically conceived, metaphysical God, or a 'soul' or essential self behind all the momentary experiences, or indeed any enduring essence or substance to any of the things which are experienced. Given this view, Cupitt's third element of the 'Eye of God' clearly cannot be based on any theistic realism, rather it is merely the case that,

"the practice of looking at oneself and one's world as if through the eye of God - that is from the universal and ideal standpoint - confers many practical advantages."
(Cupitt, 1997:85)

The objection which can be levelled against Cupitt's version of religion, is its superficiality. But Cupitt consciously eschews all notion of depth as a natural consequence of his postmodernism - the search for deeper meanings is an illusory project which imposes shackles on us and leads to our exploitation, by those who use the opportunity it affords in order to wield ecclesiastical-political power over us. Unlike other forms of affirmative postmodernism, which we must now explore in greater detail, Cupitt's 'Solar' religion does not so much put something else positive in the space left by nihilism, as celebrate the 'unbearable lightness of being' engendered by the nihilistic attitude. But, contrary to Cupitt, it might turn out to be the case that the heralding of modernity's demise, and along with it

the whole modern worldview's structure of materialistic, scientific rationalism, is the heralding also of the return of that which it had excluded. Affirmative postmodernism need not take the form envisaged by Cupitt, or by Nietzsche.

The image which comes across from a reading of Tarnas's version of the 'end of modernity', and its postmodern sequel, is that of a hard shell, cracked open to allow access to a sweet kernel - the shell is that of modernism with its 'disenchanted', mechanical understanding of the universe constructed by its rationalist methods, while the living reality which is revealed is a universe in which the old, modern dualities of subject and object, spirit and matter, masculine and feminine, and so on, are reintegrated within a regained holism. But the vision of Tarnas, on the postmodern sequel to modern thought, is paralleled by a similar response within earlier anti-modernism. In *The Flight From Reason*, subtitled *Volume I of The Age of the Irrational*, Webb (1971) describes the outburst, within the broad development of Romanticism, of movements such as Spiritualism, Theosophy, and the Celtic Revival with its magic-oriented mysticism - all of this in the midst of the nineteenth century heyday of rationalism and scientific materialism. These movements constituted a continuation of the Romantic Movement's protest against the Age of Reason and, in Webb's view, represented "a widespread flight from reason, whose findings appeared intolerable to the dignity of man, and insupportable to his knowledge of himself" (Webb, 1971:xiii). It seems from Webb's account that the revulsion against rationalism, and its mechanistic, 'disenchanted' universe, necessarily involved a resurgence of the spiritual. But this 'crisis of consciousness', as Webb describes it, occurred in a situation which was different in one fundamental respect from that of a century later: in the nineteenth century the dominance of rationalism still held sway in a way which was not possible in the twentieth, as the hegemony of the modern West, along with its ideology of reason, science and progress, broke down. In Part III of this thesis the aftermath of these nineteenth century developments, and their influence on both Lewis and twentieth century affirmative postmodernism, will be discussed more fully. At this point, however, a brief account is necessary for the purposes of providing a sense of balance as we relate the thought of Lewis,

and of the Eastern Christian tradition, to sceptical postmodern theory.

2.5 The return of the spiritual

Tarnas's (1996) description of the 'end of modernity' is powerfully complemented by a postmodern spiritual vision, but, unlike the situation of a century before, this late twentieth century resurgence of the spiritual has met a modernism which is in retreat and disarray. One telling sign of the current decline of the modernist worldview is the widespread adoption of various practices of 'alternative medicine' amongst Western medical practitioners, which contrasts with the vehemently negative attitude which was almost unquestioned only a couple of decades earlier. There are many more such signs, although this is not the place to describe them all. But another, which is particularly relevant to this study, is clearly evident in the increasing proliferation of books on spiritual or supernatural topics on the shelves of bookshops, which has occurred in the last two decades of the twentieth century. While much of this literature is a popular treatment of topics like angels, fringe mysticism and 'pop' spirituality, Tarnas's scholarly work is equally concerned with spiritual matters. Liberal theologians of the earlier twentieth Century, like Bultmann, had in mind a modern populace for whom anything supernatural was no longer believable (Neill, 1966). Amongst academics too, including those in many theological faculties, the despiritualised 'empty universe' was taken as axiomatic. But Tarnas describes the return of the spiritual, not merely in popular literature, but to academic discourse. Striking corroboration of this is provided in an introductory text on psychology produced for South African universities. In the section on psychopathology (Edwards, 1987), traditional African interpretations of psychological disturbance are treated without any of the disdain or condescension which has been directed at premodern European understandings of mental illness as a standard introductory feature in modern texts on psychopathology. This must obviously be ascribed to current concerns with overcoming eurocentricity (an issue which is itself part of postmodernity, it must be noted). But what is more astonishing, in the light of the previously ruling, modernist orthodoxy in psychology, is to find a further section in which spirit-possession is seriously considered as a factor in schizophrenia, along with a

discussion of the spiritual visions of Emmanuel Swedenborg.

What Tarnas presents involves, in fact, a recrudescence of the Neolithic pantheistic spirituality of the Great Mother, of pre-Christian and pre-Aryan Europe. Similarly, Harvey's (1997) *Listening People, Speaking Earth*, relates 'Neo-paganism' directly to postmodernism. Tarnas's book concludes by furnishing a vision of a respiritualised Western mind. In this he emphasises Jung's notion of archetypes, in which he sees more than Jung's Kantianism allowed, as well as the recovery of the feminine in spirituality. Tarnas writes from a position which is not Christian but is not unsympathetic to Christianity. He sees what could be referred to as the redemption of the Western mind in "the new awareness of feminine perspectives of the divine" such as the re-emergence of 'Goddess' spirituality as well as in "the rise of Sophianic Judaeo-Christian theology and the papal declaration of the *Assumptio Mariae*" (Tarnas, 1996:443). Here is an affirmative postmodernism with implications for Christianity. These views on the re-emergence of the spiritual are paralleled in Steyn's (1994) account of the New Age Movement: she places it within the phenomenon of an affirmative, essentially spiritual, 'constructive postmodernism', which stands in contrast to what Rosenau refers to as sceptical, that is 'deconstructive', postmodernism. She also categorises charismatic Christianity in the same way. With regard to the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements, Martin (1990) provides confirmation of Steyn's assessment in pointing out how charismatic spirituality, which in many ways is firmly Evangelical, differs from non-pentecostal Evangelicalism's prime emphasis on the correct 'grammar of belief'. This emphasis has much of modernity about it especially in its explicit concern with propositional truth (see eg. Schaeffer, 1968). Griffin provides an explicitly developed 'constructive postmodern theology' in the State University of New York series on constructive postmodernism (eg Griffin, 1988; 1989a; 1989b) which is presented under the rubric of Christian theology, although drawing widely on other sources. There is therefore a significant case to be argued regarding the actuality of a Christian affirmative postmodernism. With regard to the topic of the present study, the issue of the broad, new spirituality associated with the affirmative face of postmodernism is obviously of

importance. Payne's (1988) subtitle of her study of Lewis's thought, "the Christian worldview of CS Lewis as incarnational reality", clearly indicates its positive or affirmative content. It will be demonstrated, though, that the affinity of his worldview with affirmative types of postmodernism is a highly ambivalent matter in which agreement on the essentially spiritual nature of reality is countered by crucial divergences in the understanding of the spiritual realm. Paradoxically, it is the negative aspect of Lewis's thought - his affinities with 'deconstructive' postmodern theory - which are more straightforward and must therefore receive particular attention in assessing Lewis as 'prophet of postmodernism'. While both of these aspects must be considered in the discussion of the work of Lewis in this thesis, it is necessary first to consider critically the credentials of Lewis to be considered as postmodern in any sense of the term. In the course of this discussion, very significant critiques of postmodernism, offered by Hawkes (1996) and Sardar (1998), will also be presented. These have bearing on both Lewis's possible postmodern status and, in the more immediate context of this part of our discussion, on the status of postmodernism itself, an issue which will affect our evaluation of Lewis in relation to postmodernism.

2.6 Postmodernism as radicalism?

In considering a possible relationship between CS Lewis and postmodernism the question which is likely to be raised is how an 'exponent of tradition' might qualify for what would appear to many to be the radical role of 'prophet of postmodernism'. In what follows it will indeed be argued that there is, despite a fundamental conservatism, also a powerful radicalism about Lewis's thought. But before we proceed to this stage of the argument it is necessary to query the identification of postmodernism and radicalism referred to in the opening sentence of this paragraph. Cupitt's (1997) distinction between 'left' and 'right' postmodernism does not provide us with an answer to this question. It might be tempting, like Cupitt, to identify 'left' postmodernism with radicalism. The association of conservatism with 'right' postmodernism might seem obvious but, within the field of modern ideologies, it has always been misleading to conceive of the movements of the 'right' as merely conservative. The most striking instance of the inadvisability of confounding rightist extremism and conservatism is provided by Blinkhorn's (1990) study of Fascism. Blinkhorn

makes the point that in the case of Fascism in general, and Nazism in particular, there was considerable tension between the traditional conservatives and the right-wing radicals. The latter were oriented to radical social change just as much as were the Marxists, although in somewhat different directions, and both were thereby set against the conservatives' adherence to tradition. On the other hand, the deconstructionist postmodernism which Cupitt labels as 'left' is evaluated in a very different way by those such as Eagleton (1996) and Hawkes (1996), who stand in the Marxist tradition of thought.

Neither Eagleton nor Hawkes can be labelled as 'old left' figures, remaining like fossils from a previous age. Both have a keen insight into the issues raised by postmodernism and both are very sceptical regarding the claims to radical 'oppositonality' advanced by some proponents of postmodern theory. Their critical view of postmodernism revolves around its relation to the postmodern, consumerist, global economy. The fact that William Greider (1997), a respected liberal journalist and professed believer in capitalism, can express extreme concern about the nature of the emerging global economy, lends credence to the case presented by Eagleton and Hawkes. Hawkes quotes from a postmodern theorist's appraisal of this issue:

"Capital, or rather, our imaginary of capital, still belongs for the most part to a demonology of the Other [and] artificially keeps alive older forms of *ressentiment* that have little or no purchase on a postmodern consumer society."
(Ross, quoted in Hawkes, 1996:8)

The postmodern notion of the 'other', stands as the complement of the idea of the 'grand narrative', which postmodernism rejects. What Ross does here, in setting the grand narrative of Marxism against capitalism as its Other, is to block attempts to criticise global capitalism by asserting that no such entity exists - it is merely another example of the type of large-scale theoretical construction which postmodernism attacks as 'totalisation'. In this regard Eagleton (1996:203) observes that the implication of postmodern theory is that,

"Since there is no totality to social life, there is no place for any overall change, since there is no overall system to be transformed. We are asked to believe, with gross

implausibility, that multinational capitalism is just a random concurrence of this or that practice, technique, social relation, with no systematic logic whatsoever; and all this can be offered as a 'radical' defence of pluralism against the terrors of totalisation. This is a dogma which is perhaps rather easier to maintain in Columbia University than in the Latin American nation of that name."

Like Eagleton, Hawkes's response to the position of Ross is to assert that postmodernism is the ideology of consumer capitalism. Hawkes identifies the three major ideas which are attacked in postmodern theory as: (1) the referential model of representation, (2) the autonomous subject, and (3) the totality of things, whether this is used of history as a whole or society as a whole. He points out that although these notions have been criticised previously this was never as successful as has been the case with postmodernism, "both within and beyond the academy" (Hawkes, 1996:7). He goes on to trace the genealogy of these ideas by beginning with the dramatic expansion in the power and influence of the capitalist market economy over the last fifty years, in the course of which "the concerted effort to transform people into consumers has greatly intensified" so that entire industries "are explicitly dedicated to serving capital by manipulating people into purchasing particular products" (Hawkes, 1996:8). But, in the face of this, the 'radical oppositionality' of postmodernism has nothing to say, and indeed (as Hawkes demonstrates in his quotation of Ross), its criticism is more likely to be directed against those who, in the perception of the postmodernists, are guilty of 'totalisation' in their criticism of the postmodern global market. The disqualification of 'totality', Hawkes's third aspect of the postmodern attack, provides the context within which the first two aspects of postmodernism accomplish the transformation of people into consumers. Hawkes's argument here may perhaps best be illustrated by referring to the slogan of the advertising campaign for 'Sprite' - 'Image is Everything!'. Here is an open statement by the advertising industry of the actual nature of its work. At a theoretical level the same notion is reflected in the writing of Baudrillard (see eg. Horrocks, 1999), to whom Hawkes refers. What is evident in this is the way that the idea of image in postmodern theory so closely corresponds to the role of image in postmodern consumer society. Hawkes goes beyond the aspect of consumption, to draw attention to the way in which the primacy of representation over reference has transformed the meaning of

money in the postmodern economy: while money originally symbolised material objects for the purpose of exchanging goods, it has moved progressively further from any grounding in reality, through banknotes to 'figures on computer screens' and finally to nothing more substantial than 'investor confidence'. But, despite all its postmodern ephemerality, its tiniest fluctuations "have profound effects on the material lives of human beings throughout the world" (Hawkes 1996:3). The autonomy of representation in the postmodern economy is directly linked, by Hawkes, to the denial of the autonomy of the human subject and, as in the case of the role of image, the views concerning the human subject which are expressed in postmodern theory are realised 'on the ground' in postmodern society. Hawkes (1996:4) quotes Richard Rorty's evaluation of the human subject as nothing more than "a network of beliefs, desires and emotions with nothing behind it - no substrate behind the attributes". The view of human 'selves' as nothing more than points of intersection of various representational discourses, argues Hawkes, perfectly matches a socio-economic context in which the advertising and marketing industries determine people's opinions and behaviours.

The argument of Hawkes is elucidated further by the attack on postmodernism by Sardar (1998) who, as Visiting Professor of Science Policy at Middlesex University, is intimately familiar with contemporary Western intellectual developments, and largely echoes Hawkes's evaluation from the rather different perspective of a Muslim intellectual. Sardar's major charges against the postmodernism of the West include the following: firstly that, in accordance with its own view of things, especially as propounded by Baudrillard, its pluralism is not in fact a valid engagement with the plurality of human cultural and religious life but is focused merely on the representations of the 'other' which it has constructed for itself; secondly that it is using its hold on the global economy to drown the traditions of other societies, apart from commodified, synthetic appropriations of those cultures, by the aggressive imposition of its consumerist ethos; and thirdly that it gratuitously generalises its own crisis of meaning to all other cultures thus removing the ground from which to resist the hegemony of the West. The very cause of the collapse of the West's universalising

modernism is turned into the new means of maintaining Western domination. For, if truth is not a possibility, the consequence is a denial of the truth of non-Western cultures along with that of the modern West. Thus, at its moment of bankruptcy, Western Culture pulls down all other cultures also, by universalising the emptiness which it has discovered in its own structures of meaning. And what is posited at the theoretical level is actualised in the lives of those other societies by the overwhelming power of the Western controlled global economy and media. In the light of the previous section of this chapter, it is significant that Sardar (1998) includes affirmative postmodern developments within the scope of his attack, mentioning the 'constructive postmodernism' of Griffin in particular.

2.7 Conclusion: evaluating the postmodern

In the approach of Vattimo (1988), as in the case other theorists whose postmodernism stands in what Snyder (1988) names as the tradition of European nihilism flowing from Nietzsche and Heidegger, the very idea of evaluating postmodernism is a contradiction in terms. Evaluation, in the sense which it is used here, implies measuring the thing being evaluated against some standard of truth or objective value. But, in introducing the work of Vattimo, Snyder (1988:xxi) states that:

"After Nietzsche's announcement of the death of God, Vattimo infers, it may legitimately be said that the 'true nature' of all value is exchange value; and it is into this flux of values that the traditional metaphysical Being has today begun to dissolve and disappear. In the era of philosophical nihilism nothing can stand outside the realm of universal equivalence or lay claim to 'authenticity' ... "

The radicalness of this position lies in its attack on the traditional understanding of the objectivity of values. As Snyder points out, what this type of theorising does is to reduce 'fact' and 'truth' to value, but this is not objective value, because in this understanding value equates to 'interest'. We are never disinterested, that is neutral or impartial, because we are always driven by our interests. This position should not come as alien to Marxists, such as Eagleton and Hawkes whose response to postmodernism was discussed earlier: it echoes the principle of Marx that there is no external standard of value by which to judge between the

proletariat and the bourgeoisie in their conflict. Any such pretensions to objective value can only amount to a ploy by which the ideology generated by the bourgeois class disempowers and binds the proletariat with 'chains of thought'. But within Marxism it seems that, contrary to its explicit theory of value, there always lurked the unspoken assumption that the cause of the proletariat was not only historically inevitable but that it was also right. It was a just cause. This is the reason that Eagleton and Hawkes cannot abandon themselves and the world to postmodern global society, for they perceive that it removes the moral basis of the cause of those who find themselves on the dark underside of the global economy. The 'radical oppositionality' which they uphold, and by which they measure postmodernism and find it lacking, is a radical opposition to injustice. In Lewis's view (Lewis, 1960) they are better than their philosophy, because the materialism of that philosophy, like the type of postmodern theory described by Vattimo (1988), does not allow for 'better' or 'worse' in moral terms. And thus we return to our point, that evaluation, along moral lines is not a possibility within a style of theorising which identifies all values as 'exchange-values', different interpretations between which there is nothing to choose - except on the basis of our interests.

This is an extremely important aspect of the present study because (as will be evident in subsequent chapters), if there is one theoretical point on which CS Lewis does not yield then, even more than was the case for the traditional Christian doctrine which he saw as his task to defend, it is the objective nature of moral value. But if there is one aspect which might disqualify Lewis from any categorisation as postmodern and, especially, from any characterisation as a 'prophet of postmodernism', then this is it - at least in the eyes of many who align themselves with a postmodern position. This point will therefore be crucial to the development of the argument of this thesis. At this stage, though, it must be recalled that the 'deconstructive' postmodernism, to which Snyder refers, may not be the only mode of being *post-modern*. Tarnas identifies Goethe and Rudolf Steiner as key figures in a postmodernism which goes beyond nihilism, and the scepticism and cynicism with which

it tends to be associated. As Bortoft (1996) demonstrates in his presentation of the science of Goethe and, as Tarnas asserts with regard to the 'participatory epistemology' of Goethe and Steiner, this type of affirmative postmodernism is not objective either. This might appear to provide yet another impediment to the case which this thesis seeks to present, but Lewis's close association with many adherents of Steiner's Anthroposophy (eg see Harwood, 1979), and his attitude to the science of Goethe and Steiner (Lewis, 1978), provide promising material for this issue to be argued further. In addition, it will be shown that Lewis's link with the Eastern Christian tradition provides yet another perspective from which to consider the question of objectivity, and also Lewis's connection with postmodernism. No less than Vattimo's focus on 'interest' and Nietzsche's vehement assertion of the role of passion in human life and thought, in a figure like St Maximus the Confessor, whose intellectual achievement is as central to the Eastern Christian tradition as St Thomas Aquinas's is to the Western tradition, there is an implicit but complete denial of the possibility of objective truth (*Four Centuries on Love*, transl: Palmer et al 1982). Apart from these aspects, though, there are a number of other lines of enquiry which we must go on to pursue in the following chapters. In doing so we will not only assess the position of CS Lewis in relation to postmodernism but we will also necessarily evaluate postmodernism in terms of the moral criteria within which Lewis's thought operated. Not to do so would make a travesty of any claim to seriously consider the thought of Lewis - for such is its nature. Certainly, from what is plainly evident in his work, Lewis would be at least equally stringent in his criticisms of the issues raised by Eagleton and Hawkes, as well as by Sardar, as they are. All three would repudiate any ascription of postmodernism to themselves. Whether or not the objectivism of Lewis's view of morality dooms us to a conclusion even less certain than that reached by Robinson (1999), regarding the role of Nietzsche as a 'prophet of postmodernism', is a matter which remains to be seen.

CHAPTER THREE

PREMODERN, MODERN AND POSTMODERN: ISSUES IN THE USE OF TERMS

3.1 The problematic terminology of 'premodern, modern and postmodern'

As stated in Chapter One, CS Lewis may be regarded as representative of conservatism as a broad social and intellectual phenomenon, but it is evident that Lewis's conservatism was atypical, that is if Thatcher, or Reagan, or South African rightwing nationalism, or even Disraeli, Burke or de Tocqueville, are taken as typical of conservatism. However, if the term 'conservative' is problematic then, equally, there are problems, with the notion of the premodern. Gamble (1981) points out that conservatism must be understood as an ideology developed in the context of modernity - the conservative cannot merely be equated with the premodern. Similarly, traditionalism, as a response to the challenge of modernity, cannot simply be equated with tradition as it functions in a society untouched by the impact of modernity. But if, as Aeschliman (1998) implies, Lewis can be identified with an anti-modernism and a traditionalism which consciously resorted to tradition in response to modernity, there were other elements in Lewis's work in which, it might be argued, a primal 'premodernity' stood in contrast to the modern. These aspects of the 'premodern' can be linked partly to Lewis's enduring fascination with, and qualified respect for pre-Christian paganism (Lewis, 1959; 1960; 1977; 1987a). However, as will be shown in the further course of this thesis, the connection with the 'premodern' in Lewis is also, but in a very different mode, a connection with the Eastern Christian tradition. The application here of the term 'premodern' to both pre-Christian paganism and Eastern Christianity indicates a crucial need for clarification of the senses in which this term is used. This is particularly important in the attempt, in this chapter, to relate the nature of postmodernity not merely to modernity but also to premodernity. The 'premodernity' of Eastern Christianity

demonstrates a startling affinity with important elements of postmodernism - a matter on which no less a figure than Jacques Derrida has commented at length (see Hart, 1989; Cupitt, 1998). But, before we can address the question of the relationship between the 'premodern' and the postmodern, there is an issue, which has been alluded to by the use of inverted commas with the term 'premodern', which must first be clarified. More so than in the case of ancient paganism, the use of the term 'premodern' is problematic when applied to the Christianity of the East. This problem has still wider ramifications, which are evident in Sardar's (1998) treatment of postmodernism in relation to societies other than Western.

Sardar's critique of postmodernism carries implications for the concept of the premodern, a term which he never uses. The categories of 'premodern', 'modern' and 'postmodern' provide an attractively neat scheme for classifying the societies of the world and their worldviews. For example, Degenaar (1996:6-7) distinguishes three types of discourse:

"Premodern discourse is characterised by an absence of a self-critical approach to one's understanding of the world ... The discourse of a community of a so-called 'primitive' culture is said to move within a 'socio-mythic orbit' - a term which emphasises the role of myth in language and the collective nature of this kind of understanding ...".

"Modern discourse substitutes reason for myth and introduces a critical attitude towards the assumptions of a premodern socio-mythic order ... [it] in extreme cases develops a Grand Theory about reality and a Grand Narrative of human progress as exemplified by the rise of modernity. This notion of progress is based on an imperialism of reason which tends to disqualify premodern discourse as backward and outdated ..".

"Postmodern discourse manifests itself in an ironic relationship towards all claims to unity and finality whether produced by myth or reason. Both these claims to unity or finality are based on the assumption that there is only one correct way of understanding signs. Postmodernism assumes and demonstrates that there is a plurality of ways of understanding and that a more tolerant approach is called for."

The type of account of the premodern, modern and postmodern which is given by Degenaar is not universally accepted. Criticism of it would come not only from 'unreconstructed' Enlightenment-modernists such as Gellner (1992), as well as others such as Beck (1992),

who reject the idea of the postmodern. Detailed reference has already been made to Sardar's well-documented work, *Postmodernism and the Other: The New Imperialism of Western Culture* (Sardar, 1998), in which he is highly critical of postmodernism in general. On the one hand Sardar uses the term 'non-western' - from his perspective it would be argued that the term 'premodern' falsely implies a progression in world society, from the premodern to the modern, in which the West is given pride of place as the agent or pioneer of the process of modernisation. In this eurocentric scenario it is implied that the destiny of all other cultures is to follow in the path of modernisation opened up by the West, or to perish as irrelevant in the flow of 'universal history'. On the other hand, Gamble (1981), does indeed attribute the origins of modernity firmly to the West but without thereby ascribing any kind of moral superiority to the West, or universalism to modernity. On Gamble's reading of history, which makes no reference to postmodernism as such, the development of modernity was an entirely contingent affair, not impelled by any inner necessity. He even suggests that, given a small shift in the balance of contingencies, the Chinese voyages of discovery, which were almost exactly contemporaneous with those of Europe, might have led to Eastern instead of Western domination of the world. In Gamble's view, it remained true that Western society demonstrated no sign of superiority even into the eighteenth century (by which point China had in any case long withdrawn into insularity), and it was only the industrial and military type of superiority, bestowed by the Industrial Revolution, which delivered the fate of the world into the hands of what might possibly, up to that point, have been regarded as a civilisation of the second rank. From a different perspective, however, Dawson (1991:15-16) asks,

"Why is it that Europe alone among the civilisations of the world has been continually shaken and transformed by an energy of spiritual unrest that refuses to be content with the unchanging law of social tradition which rules the oriental cultures? It is because its religious ideal has not been the worship of timeless and changeless perfection but a spirit that strives to incorporate itself in humanity and to change the world. In the West the spiritual power has not been immobilised in a sacred social order like the Confucian state in China and the Indian caste system."

The reference to 'spiritual unrest', although it is somewhat ambiguous, may offset the

apparently laudatory tone of Dawson's answer to his own question. If, in addition, we read 'spiritual' not in the positive but in a neutral sense, according to which 'spirit' carries the potential for good or evil, then this would allow the "energy of spiritual unrest" to be understood as a source of 'dis-ease' in Western culture - one which has created the perpetual ferment of change which has been interpreted in the West as 'progress'. It would be possible to continue a debate on these lines, in which anti-modernism and anti-eurocentricity would figure largely, but instead, for our present purposes it is enough to synthesise these ideas of Sardar, Gamble and Dawson in order to produce a particular interpretation of the historical role of the West in the world.

3.2 Clarifying the status of modernity and premodernity

This interpretation of the role of the West in relation to modernity encompasses several linked assertions. Firstly, modernity is not a universal and necessary stage in the unfolding of world history: there was no inherent quality of moral superiority which led to the emergence of modern society in the West and to its subsequent domination of the world. Whatever the worth of the moral and cultural heritage which the West received from its dual Classical and Christian roots, it was factors other than these which led, in the nineteenth century, to a domination by the West which it had not had within its power up to that point (Gamble, 1981). The cause is to be found instead in the coalescing of the 'Bourgeois Revolution' - the long social revolution which ended feudalism through the emergence of a new entrepreneurial, capitalist class - together with the Industrial Revolution (Gamble, 1981). The domination of the West was a technological, military and economic reality which had no implications regarding any superiority of the West in culture, ethics or philosophy. It is important to note, though, that the 'energy of spiritual unrest' identified by Dawson (1991), which drove these changes, is understood by him to go back to its roots and is not, in his view merely to be identified with the emergence of modernity. The impact of figures such as St Augustine and St Thomas Aquinas would have to be regarded as being as much a part of this animus of the West as that of Bacon or Galileo. Within the state of modernity which resulted from these changes, a worldview developed which was based on

faith in reason, science and progress, allied with a re-appropriation of the maxim of Protagoras that 'Man is the measure of all things'. Gamble (1981) names this modern worldview 'the Western Ideology' and describes how its major variants of liberalism and socialism came to dominate social and political discourse wherever the influence of the West spread. In their different ways both these forms of modern ideology assumed that the social conditions with which they were associated represented a universal stage in world history, not merely a part of one story within a multiplicity of stories within the world. But, by the time of Gamble's writing at the commencement of the nineteen eighties, he was able to note the widespread malaise of modernity and the loss of grip of the 'Western ideology' and its constituent modern ideologies on the minds of people within modern society in general. In this context, the view of Sardar (1998), that Western culture, in its modern incarnation, must still be understood as only one amongst other cultures within the world, can be summed up in the assertion that this modern Western culture, despite its claim to primacy in embodying the very principle of progress, is notable only for its hypertrophied state and pathological dominance. But despite Sardar's objections to the notion of the postmodern, the term does indicate the collapse of confidence, which had already been noted by Gamble (1981), and which became more widespread in the ensuing two decades. As indicated in the previous chapter, that collapse afforded the opportunity for renewed self confidence on the part of previously repressed non-western societies, as in the Islamic world, as well as the expression of phenomena which had been repressed within the West under the hegemony of modernity.

It is in the light of all this that the use of 'premodern' must be seen as problematic. There is, firstly, the kind of objection implied in Sardar's preference for the term 'non-western': to categorise a society or culture as premodern betrays the assumption that all societies other than those of Western Europe are merely a prelude to the emergence and final triumphant flowering of modern, that is Western society. As indicated already, on this understanding the fate of all these other, non-western societies must be either to fade into extinction or marginality, or else to modernise, which, as Gamble (1981) so powerfully insists, means to

adopt at least some of the key features of the society which emerged in the West. From an entirely different perspective, Gamble's interpretation is borne out by Husain & Ashraf (1976). Sardar's category of 'non-western' does bear another negative sense, however, one which is similar to that which led to the term 'non-white' being repudiated during the course of the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. But Sardar is obviously prepared to tolerate this depreciatory sense as the term does give at least some sense of parallelism and contemporaneity between the existence of Western and other societies. The concept of premodernity may be less objectionable if applied, for example, to Stone Age societies rather than to the millennia-old civilisations of China and India, even given the greater or lesser metamorphoses forced on these latter societies by the obtrusion of economic, social and ideological elements emanating from the modern West. But even then the use of the term cannot avoid the implication that the existence of 'premodern' societies, whether Stone Age or other, is somehow historically contingent on a process whose fulfilment is focused on the West. As will be argued below, this assumption, whether explicitly stated or not, obscures the project of tracing parallels between features of other 'non-western' societies and current postmodern developments, which follows in the rest of this chapter, and which is preparatory to the analysis of evidence for the postmodern in the work of CS Lewis. But there is a second problem in the use of the term 'premodern' which relates, not to its application to non-western cultures, but to its application to the history of society in Western Europe.

To refer to the medieval society of Western Europe as 'premodern' could be understood as implying no essential relationship, except an arbitrary one of succession, between it and the 'modern' society of the West which immediately succeeded it. This was precisely what was claimed by early modern theorists with regard to the originality of the status of their views and understanding of the world (Gamble, 1981; Tarnas, 1996), but it is clearly impossible that entirely new cultural and intellectual forms could have appeared without any roots in what preceded them. In fact, aspects of medieval thought, for example the Thomist developments of rationalism and empiricism, humanism, and natural law, all contributed

material from which modern thought was fashioned (Tarnas, 1996). So also, the crucial modern principle of progress cannot be understood except in its origins in the Christian understanding that history has its goal in the purposes of God (Tarnas, 1996): liberal evolutionism and Marxist historical inevitability both move towards future states of materialist beatitude of society which echo Christian understandings of the kingdom of God. Medieval society therefore cannot be regarded simply as premodern alongside aboriginal Australian, ancient Egyptian or classical Chinese societies: the immediate precursors of modernity are to be found within medieval, Western European society and not anywhere else. But this conclusion does not imply a reversion to the triumphalist eurocentric view of world history. Rather than being the flowering of inherent potential, the emergence of modernity after the Middle Ages might be viewed alternatively as a perversion of the medieval potential. This is stated explicitly in Gamble (1981) and is implied in the line of argument pursued by Lewis (1955; 1963) when he suggests that, for the society whose members he was addressing, the quickest way forward, was to go back on developments in its history, in order to begin again from a point at which a wrong turning had been taken. If the term 'premodern' is used at all, it is therefore doubly important to be cautious, particularly in the context of this thesis, so as not to obscure either the continuities between the 'premodernity' of Western Europe and the modern era, or the points of contact between non-western 'premodernities' and postmodernity in the West, which we must now consider. This type of connection between 'premodern' and postmodern, which is to be found within the Eastern Christian tradition - with which CS Lewis will later be shown to have some significant affinities - is crucial to the present study. In this chapter the relation of the Eastern Christian tradition to postmodernism will be discussed in principle, while the details of how this relationship applies in this study will be discussed in a further chapter of this thesis.

3.3 Premodern religion as postmodern?

As we proceed in this section, the term 'premodern' will continue to be used in preference to Sardar's 'non-western', as it does convey something of the way that certain understandings,

which Western culture tended to discard in the course of modernisation, are now experiencing a new recognition. In a book which is constructed in the form of a debate (Griffin & Smith 1989), Griffin is critical of the way in which Smith appears to regard postmodernism as a return to the premodern. This is an easy assumption to fall into when, for example, we are presented with the postmodern shift, in the natural sciences, from the mechanical atomistic model to an organic relational model which bears a strong similarity to 'premodern' worldviews (Harman, 1983; Tarnas, 1996); and it is even easier when the recrudescence of paganism in the late twentieth century West is understood as postmodern (Harvey, 1997). Smith's interpretation arises, however, out of considered reflection from an Advaitic Vedantic perspective and not from this type of naive perception. It is nevertheless important to distinguish between a postmodern interpretation which incorporates elements of the 'premodern', and a simplistic idea that postmodernity is merely premodernity re-established. This is particularly important in relation to this study's concern with Eastern Christianity.

As we turn to a consideration of the Eastern Christian tradition, we face the reality that the conservative or reactionary tendencies within Eastern Orthodoxy cannot be ignored in any attempt to trace its postmodern affinities. Ware (1978:9) states,

"To many in the twentieth-century West, the Orthodox Church seems chiefly remarkable for its air of antiquity and conservatism: the message of the Orthodox to their Western brethren seems to be, 'We are your past'".

This acknowledgement by Kallistos Ware, a prominent representative of the Christian East and interpreter of its tradition to the West, serves as a point of departure for his book, *The Orthodox Way*, in which he seeks to present Eastern Christianity as the ongoing tradition of, and living engagement with, "the ever new, personal and direct experience of the Holy Spirit in the present, here and now" (Ware, 1978:9). There is, however, ample evidence in support of the perception that hidebound conservatism is what is most characteristic of Eastern Orthodoxy. There are Orthodox writers, such as Behr-Sigel (1992), who are prepared to go

further than Ware in recognising the validity of the charge, but the extent of the reactionary element within Eastern Orthodoxy is graphically illustrated in the public burning of books, by the Eastern Christian writers John Meyendorff and Alexander Schmemmann, at episcopal instigation (Frank, 1998). The full import of this type of action becomes clear when it is recognised that these authors are, even more than Ware perhaps, amongst the foremost representatives of Eastern Orthodoxy to the wider world, representatives who are resolute in upholding the Eastern Orthodox Church as the only truly orthodox form of Christianity. But even that association with the West would seem to be too much of a taint for some in the Christian East. While the traditional, conservative, and even reactionary face of Eastern Christianity must be acknowledged, this should not be allowed to obscure elements which place it within the field of reference of Cupitt's 'left' postmodernism. Its affinities with postmodernism, as has been mentioned, have attracted the attention of Derrida himself. Perhaps the prime feature of Eastern Christianity in this regard, and the one with which Derrida is concerned, is its 'negative theology' or apophaticism. The apophatic method strongly parallels Derrida's deconstructionism in some of its key features. But there are also parallels, although perhaps not quite as strong, between postmodern theory and Eastern Christian thought, on issues such as rationalism, conceptual substantialism and the autonomy of the human subject, which have been crucially important to modern thought. A detailed discussion of these must wait until later in this thesis but, at this point, the mention of this 'postmodernism' within 'premodern' Eastern Christianity brings to a focus the question of the relationship between the premodern and the postmodern in general.

In discussing the relation of the Eastern Christian tradition to the broad phenomenon of the postmodern, it is again necessary to dispense firstly with the issues of neo-conservatism and anti-modernism. Cupitt's category of 'right' postmodernism may be very apt in respect of the type of reactionary attitudes on the part of elements within Eastern Orthodoxy which have already been described. It would be foolish to deny that there may be a strong element of neo-conservatism in this response, which has been especially evoked from within the Eastern Orthodox Churches in the economically and politically aggravated conditions which

have developed in Eastern Europe and Russia since the fall of communism. It is not entirely easy to differentiate this type of 'rightist' response, from anti-modernism in other senses, especially in the Eastern Churches. Although anti-modernism is often associated with the socio-political 'right', this link is not a necessary one. An striking illustration of the inherent resistance of the Christian East to 'progress', which predates the birth of modernity, is provided by Ihde (1983:35):

"Whereas the Latin West from the monasteries on accepted technology into the precincts of the holy - every cathedral must have a clock - the Eastern regions forbade such inventions in sacred space. Clocks must remain outside the realm of eternity, thus outside the church in Orthodox lands."

One can find in this a reflection of Dawson's identification of the West's 'energy of spiritual unrest' as opposed to the gravity of the sacred status quo of the East - but applied here to the distinction between the West and the Christian East, not just the non-Christian East. While Ihde's example goes back to an earlier period than modernity, this resistance to change can only be regarded as having fed into later anti-modernism. But with regard to the alliance of anti-modernism with tendencies to the 'right', this was, in the West, quite characteristic of the Romantic movement in the nineteenth and into the twentieth century. In Romanticism there was also a powerful tendency to an association with a religiously inclined nationalism (Tarnas, 1996), something which is not alien to Eastern Orthodoxy either. With regard specifically to anti-modernism, Griffin (1990) points out that there have been a variety of anti-modern movements, but a prime example is the idolisation, within the nineteenth century Romantic Movement, of the Middle Ages as a kind of golden age. On the other hand, the parallel Romantic phenomenon of the Celtic Revival, described in Webb (1971), embraced elements and tendencies which could be regarded as making it more than merely an expression of anti-modernism, even though it undoubtedly was that also. There are strong parallels between the Celtic Revival, particularly with regard to the role of the poet Yeats in it, and the late 20th Century emergence of Neo-paganism, which Harvey (1997) has no hesitation in categorising as postmodern. Thus there is a fine line between the anti-modern and the postmodern, which is not always easily drawn. With regard to the

status of Eastern Christianity, the tendencies within Western Christianity towards appropriation of elements of its tradition - in a way similar to that in Neo-paganism, or the current Western interest in Indian and Chinese religion and philosophy - is an additional factor to be considered alongside the issue of anti-modernism. It does bring into focus the wider question of links which may be found between 'premodern' religion and postmodernism.

The interest displayed in recent decades amongst Western Christians with regard to Eastern Christian spirituality, especially the use of the 'Jesus Prayer' (Maloney, 1983; Behr-Sigel, 1992), could be considered to be similar in nature to the rise of Neo-paganism (Harvey, 1997). But Harvey's case of Neo-paganism does differ from that of Eastern Christianity. Neo-paganism is much closer in nature to unambiguously new religious movements such as the New Age Movement, even though there are distinct differences (Harvey, 1997). Their similarity lies in the fact that both are very much products of the late twentieth century, despite the conscious attempt within Neo-paganism to revive and find, or create, links with classical paganism. In the case of the 'Jesus Prayer', Ware (1987) describes its nature and use and traces its development through more than a millennium of experience in the Christian East, before going on to discuss the widespread adoption of the 'Prayer' amongst Western Christians. It would appear that this is more comparable with the impact in the West of, and adoption of practices from, other ancient religions from still further east, including Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism. This appropriation by the West is described by Bosch (1991) as part of the development of postmodernism. But if the adoption in the West, of religious belief systems or practices from the East, is to be regarded as a postmodern development, this use of the term requires some explanation. This issue is highlighted in Griffin & Smith (1990). What is it that justifies the categorisation of centuries-old, and in fact millennia-old, worldviews and practices as *post-modern*? If these religions pre-date modernity by such great periods of time then would it not be correct rather to refer to them rather as premodern? And if nineteenth century, Romantic infatuation with Medievalism, including the Catholicism of the Middle ages (Webb, 1971), must be regarded

as merely *anti*-modern, then why not the twentieth century West's turning to Eastern religion?

Our evaluation of the status of the Eastern Christian tradition, or aspects of it, as postmodern, hangs on these issues as much as does that of other religions from further east. Perhaps one important factor in answering these questions lies in a consideration of the meanings of *pre*- and *post*- in their general use. Some illustrative examples might be helpful in this regard. The tribal Celtic and Germanic societies of old Europe must be regarded as premodern on the straightforward grounds that they pre-date the emergence of modern society in Europe. But inasmuch as modern society is characterised by an industrial economy, the development of a bourgeois class and an urban labouring class, the rise of the state and nationalism, and by rationalist-empiricist science as a dominant belief system, these ancient European societies must be identified as premodern in a stronger sense also. So too must the civilisation of the high Middle Ages, even though it contained within itself the precursors of modernity, such as empiricist and rationalist philosophical tendencies (Copleston, 1955; Breisach 1994; Cupitt, 1997). Hinduism and Buddhism also pre-date modernity in their development and so, despite other arguments already brought against this usage, it might seem that it is legitimate to label them as premodern. If one considers Indian society (from which it is difficult to abstract Hinduism as a religion) the premodern elements are obvious even after two centuries of sustained impact from modernity. Indian society retains many of its traditional features, for example the hierarchical ordering of caste society, and peasant-based agriculture as an important economic component. These aspects of Indian society have been more successful, in resisting erosion by the forces of modernity, than the equivalent aspects of society in the West. But their survival beyond the point in history where modernity has begun to decline, does not itself constitute them as postmodern occurrences. Rather they could be regarded as premodern continuations into an age of postmodernity. Particularly with regard to religious observance at the village level, contemporary Indian society, viewed from a religious perspective, can perhaps best be equated with the religions of Greece or Rome, not merely prior to the triumph of

Christianity, but in the pre-Classical period The maintenance of the household shrine is one of the more striking of these similarities (Basham, 1959). But, if the 'premodern' society of the Western Middle Ages contained within itself the precursors of modernity, then what of other societies which pre-dated modernity and which were equally, or more sophisticated in their philosophy, science and worldviews? If it is said that Western Medieval society possessed a potential to give birth to modernity which was lacking in any other, the complaint might be raised that this gives an unfairly central place to the West in the history of the world. Even the answers, given previously, that the domination of the West was contingent and not a matter of inherent superiority, and that in any case the development of modernity might be regarded as the perversion rather than the flowering of the cultural potential of the West, might fail to satisfy the critic of the West. But if non-western societies could be shown to contain the resources to transcend the worldview and ways of thought of modernity - 'postmodernism before its time' - an entirely different light might be thrown on the issue. In this case, these non-western societies might even be seen as superior in that it was part of their inherent potential to avoid the dead-end of modernity which the West entered under the illusion of progress. If this interpretation seems excessive it must still be affirmed that there are striking parallels between intellectual developments within 'premodern' non-western society and Western postmodernism. It is to these which we must now proceed.

3.4 Postmodern theory in premodern society?

The twentieth century has seen the development of renewed energy and confidence within Hinduism and Buddhism, paralleling a loss of confidence in the West with regard to aspects such as faith in modern Western science, amongst other aspects (Kosko, 1993). There are a number of factors which must be considered in evaluating the relationship of Eastern philosophy and religion to modernity and postmodernity. It has been remarked by more than one commentator (eg Tarnas, 1996) that all the significant issues in the subsequent development of Western thought were raised in one form or another in the philosophies of Classical Greece. Indeed, a genealogical link with Western thought may be traced back to

that of Ancient Greece: the blend of Platonic and Christian thought lies at its origin and the philosophical developments of the later Middle ages were rooted directly in the appropriation of Aristotelianism. But there are further common features such as the way that the atomist and materialist assumptions on which Western science based its development echoed Ancient Greek materialist philosophies; the manner in which the agnosticism and atheism of 'Enlightenment' thought reflected their Greek precursors; and even the paralleling of Sophist ideas on the nature of everything as flux and on the appropriate ethics to accompany this worldview, by developments in Western nihilism and consequent postmodernist theorising. But a comparison with Eastern philosophical thought reveals parallel developments not only with regard to issues such as idealism and empiricism (Chatterjee, 1975; Lott, 1980), but also in respect of ways of thought which are regarded in the late twentieth century West as being at the forefront of current intellectual developments. These intellectual accomplishments of the East anticipate their Western equivalents by centuries if not millennia. In his reinterpretation of religion in terms of deconstructionist postmodern theory, Cupitt (1997; 1998) draws attention to parallels with Buddhist thought including the decentering and deconstruction of the experiencing subject, and the impossibility of escaping from language in order to make contact with an underlying substratum of extra-linguistic reality. The relationship with deconstructionist postmodern theory is traced in detail by le Roux with regard to both Indian and Japanese Buddhism (le Roux, 1996a, 1996b, 1997). The characteristic emphases of constructive postmodernism on the 'interconnectedness of all things' and the organic nature of the cosmos, is recognised in Buddhism also by writers such as Ikeda (1995) and Clasquin (1997) as well as Odin (1990), who discusses Shingon Buddhism as illustrating the nature of constructive postmodernism.

Sardar (1998) powerfully extends this line of argument on the way in which non-western systems of thought, which pre-date the development of modernity, also anticipate developments which follow, or are associated with its collapse. Amongst other points he shows how Indian philosophical logic did not fall into the straitjacket of binary-oppositional

logic which Western thought inherited from Aristotle. In contrast to dualistic Western logic, which uses sequential techniques of quantification and negation, Indian logic depends on a geometrical system of demonstrating relationships of similarity and convergence:

"Instead of a universe seen through an either/or duality, the Indian system sees the world through a four-fold logic (X is neither A, nor non-A, nor both A and non-A, nor neither A nor non-A). ...[It] achieves a precise and unambiguous formulation of universal statements in terms of its technical language without recourse to quantification over unspecified universal domains." (Sardar, 1998:42)

Although it is true that, within the West, criticism of the binary logical method has been a familiar element of the Marxist critique, it is interesting to note that this has now achieved wider recognition within Western science in the form of 'fuzzy logic' (Kosko, 1993), even to the extent of being incorporated in the electronic technology applied in the programming of household appliances. Although Kosko does not use the term 'postmodern', he is explicit in stating that this represents the undermining of a central pillar of the whole tradition of modern science. Sardar's concludes his discussion of Indian logic by stating that,

"non-western cultures are not only aware of the diversity of realities but they have also developed criteria for the validation of different realities. The universe is not as meaningless as postmodernism would have us believe".

This reference to the capacity of non-western cultures to 'validate different realities' is directed at the heart of what he sees as postmodernism's self-congratulatory pluralism with regard to multiple realities, which is allied with its easy nihilism. Sardar argues that the apprehension of the multiple nature of reality is used illegitimately in postmodern theory. He cites the different senses of 'reality' in Islamic philosophical thought, from reality *per se*, through rationally constructed reality, socially constructed reality and still other senses, to absolute reality as that reality which is known only to God. He concludes that

"the point is that postmodernism is not what 'inevitably happens' when people discover that there are many realities and many ways of knowing ... Muslim and other non-Western people have always known this." (Sardar, 1998:41)

Sardar also draws attention to the way in which Chinese and other non-Western systems of thought incorporated the understandings of chaos theory, which are current in the postmodern West.

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore the full detail of all the ways in which postmodern theory is prefigured in Islamic, Taoist, Hindu, Buddhist and other non-Western thought. But some conclusions of significance to this present study can be drawn. In the first place, we have further cause to question the type of scheme employed by Degenaar (1996) in which premodern, modern and postmodern are presented as clearly distinguishable categories, and in which the modern serves as the necessary link to proceed from the premodern to the postmodern. In the examples cited from Sardar and others, we see systems of thought in which 'premodern' and 'postmodern' elements were able to co-exist, before the impact of modernity, without any necessity of mediation via modernity. It must be recognised that Chinese, Indian and Arabic philosophy developed in highly sophisticated ways without ever having been exposed to modern thought. Within the context of Western thought, it is only 'chronological snobbery' (Lewis, 1959) which leads modern people to assume that, because they pre-date Descartes, Locke, Rousseau or Dewey, the thinking of St Augustine and St Thomas Aquinas must in some essential way be lacking, or less 'advanced', in comparison with these philosophers of modernity. There is nevertheless an historical progression, if not a progression in intellectual sophistication, which leads from these Christian philosophers, through the moderns to postmodernism. In this sense it might be permissible to refer to them as 'premodern'. But in the case of non-Western philosophy, the only effect of this appellation is to obscure its just title to be regarded as worthy of intellectual respect, irrespective of the century, recent or distant, in which it might have first been formulated. For example, *The Yogacara Idealism* (Chatterjee, 1975) documents the highly sophisticated arguments on the idealist-realist controversy within Indian philosophy, which were developed by thinkers such as Vasubandhu in the fourth century and which go well beyond the parallel discourse in the West more than a millennium later. It is the philosophical developments, subsequent to these debates, by Nagarjuna in the seventh

century, which are directly compared with the postmodernism of Derrida by le Roux (1996a; 1997). It is quite clear from this that the 'premodern' and the 'postmodern' are inextricably associated, not only within Indian thought, but also within that of the Islamicised Arabs and the Chinese if we note Sardar's examples. There is no general pattern, of the type described by Degenaar (1996), in which socio-mythic discourse is undermined by critical rational discourse, which is itself undermined by ironic, intellectually plural discourse. It appears that all three can co-exist, within some non-western cultures at least, without any need for them to be divided from each other in terms of a premodern/modern/postmodern categorisation.

3.5 Premodern myth in modern and postmodern thought?

If Degenaar's categorisation must be questioned in relation to non-western cultures, then it must also be asked how applicable it is to the West, the original locus of the emergence of modernity. When Lewis (1955) suggests that it is necessary sometimes to retrace our steps, he refers specifically to developments which have taken place within the period of the modern age. Much of the work of Lewis which will be cited in the following chapters represents just such an attempt to go back on the ways of thought of modernity. This does, of course, open Lewis to the accusation of being reactionary. But there is one specific instance identified by Lewis, of the need to retrace the intellectual paths which have led to modernity, which is directly concerned with this issue and which casts a different light on it. Degenaar (1996) identifies the dichotomy of mythic thought versus rational thought as being crucial to the difference between premodern and modern discourse. But Lewis argues that all thought is irredeemably mythical (Lewis, 1960; 1979b) and all language is immutably metaphorical (Lewis, 1981e; 1985b). This assertion contrasts strongly not only with Degenaar's distinction but also with the assumptions of Bultmann, for example, in attempting to purify Christian thought of myth and metaphor in order to make it amenable to people of the modern age (Lewis, 1975b). In numerous examples Lewis demonstrates the impossibility of this modernist project: one may indeed dispense with one myth but only by taking another as the material to which to apply one's rational capacities. Lewis (1981b)

shows how modern science is wholly dependent on a 'great myth' of natural progression (which goes beyond the mere biological theory of evolution). This is one of the topics to be covered in the a later chapter but Bischoff (1976) makes some observations in discussing the work of Dionysius the Areopagite which clarify Lewis's argument at this point. Bischoff notes that the Areopagite's elaborate system of thought is developed around another 'great myth', in this case the 'Gnostic myth', which he sees as existing within Christianity in an enduring dialectical tension with the 'Apocalyptic myth'. In the end the only truth which is available within Christianity, whether to the Areopagite or anyone else, is provided by the interpretation of one or both of these, its two 'grand' myths. To this he appends the thesis, "The language of the Areopagite is philosophical, but philosophy itself is but interpreted myth" (Bischoff, 1976:36). To Lewis, modern science is myth interpreted and applied; to Bischoff philosophy - all philosophy, not excepting modern philosophy - involves the application of reason to some or other foundational myth which is thus interpreted. This last statement is not intended as a contrast between Lewis and Bischoff but merely indicates the particular focus of each author in the sources which are referred to here. Neither draws a distinction between science and philosophy with regard to their mythic foundations, and the history of these disciplines also would discourage this.

Modern science did not call itself into existence. It grew out of Arab and medieval Western interest in the work of Aristotle (Losee, 1980), from whom Aquinas derived the dual rational and empirical approach which became the foundation of the method of modern natural science (Copleston, 1955). But the rational and empirical aspects of the scientific method had to be applied to something. The naive positivism which believed that science simply begins with data has been thoroughly discredited (Popper, 1972): the understanding of the world begins not with the data which the senses collect but with the prior models in the mind of the interpreter. These models are not themselves the product of rational or empirical processes and it is these 'socio-mythic' origins (to use Degenaar's term) of the foundational models of science which require some examination. The ancient Greek image of the atomistic, material nature of the universe was appropriated from the philosophy of

Democritus, along with the general rediscovery of the classical heritage by Renaissance intellectuals (Tarnas, 1996). There is an interesting parallel between modern science and Bischoff's account of Christian thought in this regard: just as the gnostic and apocalyptic myths have existed in continuing tension, with one or the other tending to dominate at different times, so too, in science, there has been a tension between two opposed pictures of the basic nature of the universe. The view of reality as an energy field, rather than being composed of material particles, goes back beyond its great nineteenth century exponent, Michael Faraday, but it was only with the rise of the 'New Physics' in the twentieth century that it came to undermine the domination of the particulate model of reality (Laszlo, 1993). If some would question the application of the term 'myth' to these two basic models of science then it must be asked in reply what their origins really are: they are certainly not discoveries of science, rather they are images, pictures or metaphors from which science may proceed by applying the rational and empirical method. And are these extended metaphors, of open fields or sand-like particles, not ultimately mythic in nature? In the case of theoretical physics, as in the work of Einstein, the empirical drops out of contention and even the rational is augmented, if not displaced, by the imaginative (Laszlo, 1993) - and can it not then be said, as Bischoff says of philosophy, that this science is interpreted myth?

Thus the point is underscored that, whatever the intellectual attraction of the tripartite categorisation of premodern/modern/postmodern used by Degenaar (1996), it obscures at least as much as it reveals in our understanding of human society and thought. It is true, as Degenaar states, that modern thought applies a rational and critical approach in the evaluation of premodern myth, but its understanding of progress, which Degenaar also cites, has engendered a 'chronological prejudice' which has led to the disparagement of premodern myth while modern myth has lain largely unrecognised at the foundations of modern thought. But can it confidently be averred that even postmodern thought is free of mythic dimensions - what images and metaphors underlie the account of multiple truths which gives postmodern thought its 'ironic' tone in relation to all discourse? The revival of chaos theory in late twentieth century, postmodern science (Laszlo, 1993), might give cause for reflection

on the place of chaos as a primordial reality in the mythic thought of both ancient Greeks and Hebrews. This understanding of the essential role of myth in all discourse, not only that of premodernity, needs to be taken together with the point established in the previous section of this chapter, that ways of thinking which are now judged to be postmodern have been present within some so-called premodern cultures since long before the emergence of modernity in the West.

3.6 Conclusion: premodernity, the Eastern Christian tradition and postmodernism

Our conclusion regarding myth, and the link between the premodern and the postmodern, has a double significance for this thesis: in the first place the references to links between the Eastern Christian tradition and postmodernism are set in a broad context of the co-inherence of 'premodern' and 'postmodern'; and secondly it raises questions about the sense in which CS Lewis may be regarded as a 'prophet of postmodernism'. In the light of the Eastern Christian connection, which has been referred to in respect of Lewis, it must be asked whether this 'prophecy' amounts to a 'forttelling' of something already present rather than a foretelling of developments which were still to come. This, and other questions, must be provided with an answer in the conclusion of this study. In the process of arriving at a conclusion, the relation of both Eastern Christianity and the work of CS Lewis to postmodernism (as well as to each other) will have to be considered. With regard to Eastern Christian tradition it is particularly in relation to the example set by Buddhism that the case for a postmodern reading of the Eastern Christian tradition must be pursued. To what extent can it be shown, as demonstrated in the case of Buddhism by le Roux (1996a, 1996b, 1997), that Eastern Christianity produced ways of thinking and understanding, matching those of current postmodern theorising, long before the rise or demise of modernity? If we are to establish, as has been done in the case of Buddhism, that the Eastern Christian tradition possesses centrally constitutive elements which parallel and pre-date major themes within postmodern thought, it is necessary to consider the nature of that tradition *vis-a-vis* Western Christianity. There is much that could be said about differences in the structure of the Church, the nature of doctrine, the nature of the liturgy and sacraments, the exercise of

priesthood, and other aspects of structure and process within Eastern and Western Christianity, which would not have much relevance to the present study. Instead we will focus on particular aspects of Eastern Christian thought, such as the role allowed to the rational and conceptualising faculties; and the relationship between apophatic and cataphatic theology. In attending to these aspects of religious thought, though, it is necessary to deal with broader intellectual developments within the Christian East and West, which provide the cognitive context within which this religious thought must be understood. In particular the place of figures such as St Augustine and St Thomas Aquinas within these intellectual developments will be referred to. Then, with regard to CS Lewis, some assessment of the extent of the influence of these elements of Eastern Christian discourse on Lewis will have to be made. Thereafter it will be possible to consider the contribution of Lewis to a postmodern Christian understanding in its own right.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE EASTERN CHRISTIAN TRADITION AND THE QUESTION OF THE POSTMODERN

4.1 'East is East and West is West'?: CS Lewis's 'Eastern connection'

In the previous chapter a dual task was described: firstly, to identify and clarify the elements within the Eastern Christian tradition which appear to be consonant with postmodern theory; and secondly, to identify aspects of the work and thought of CS Lewis which might qualify him to be regarded as a 'prophet of postmodernism' and to determine the sense in which this title might be applied to Lewis. The first part of this two-pronged approach is a project which is worthy of detailed study in its own right, but in the context of this study it will be dealt with in a relatively brief way as a means to achieving the goal of the second. In the course of this chapter some elements of Lewis's thought will be brought into the discussion of relevant aspects of the Eastern tradition with a view to the evaluation of their postmodern affinities. In doing so it is hoped that points of contact between Lewis and postmodernism may be established. If there are indeed affinities between the Eastern Christian tradition and the postmodern, and if Lewis drew in some way from Eastern Christianity, then this would provide one source for Lewis's prophetic role regarding postmodernism. Another, to be explored in detail in the next chapter, arises out of Lewis's direct experience of modern thought and his evaluation of it and its flaws. This second possibility with regard to Lewis's prophetic postmodernism would be more comparable with the position of Nietzsche in relation to postmodernism, as described by Robinson (1999). But Lewis's position in this regard would still have to be regarded as different from the case of Nietzsche in that it would have been influenced by Lewis's contact with the 'premodern postmodernism' of the Eastern Christian tradition. There may be some parallel between Lewis and Nietzsche even on this point, though, if we consider Nietzsche's fascination with Buddhism (Novak, 1996).

The influence of the Christian tradition in general on all of Lewis's work and thought, subsequent to his conversion, cannot be doubted on the basis of his own account of things (eg Lewis, 1955). In that account he is emphatic in stating that his aim is to represent 'mere' Christianity within the broad parameters of traditional Christian orthodoxy, which he links closely to the great credal formulations of the early Church (Lewis, 1975c). From the general tone of his religious writings it would be inconceivable that Lewis would have considered this task possible without the inclusion of the Eastern tradition and, in fact, there is evidence that Lewis did take Eastern Christianity very seriously in his assessment of the nature of the common heritage of Christianity. On the circumstantial side we must take account of the powerful influence, within Lewis's own Anglican tradition, of the Christian East (Moorman, 1983), and Lewis's own studies of the authorities of that tradition (see eg Lewis, 1979a). On a personal note Griffin (1986) records that on May 14th 1960 Lewis entertained Nicolas Zernov, then Spalding Lecturer in Eastern Orthodox Culture at Oxford, at his home. From his openly displayed interest in other religions (eg Lewis, 1955) it seems highly unlikely that Lewis would not have shown a keen interest in Eastern Orthodoxy, or that the acquaintance with Zernov would not have been related to such an interest. More substantial evidence is provided by a reading of his account of the "HCF" or highest common factor (Lewis, 1955:8) of the broad Christian tradition which he presents as *Mere Christianity*. Lewis's description of salvation is presented primarily in terms of the conversion from *bios* to *zoe*, the substitution of biological life with spiritual life. He does not exclude the traditional Western concern with atonement and merit but the balance in Lewis's discussion is decidedly to the side of the characteristically Eastern view of salvation as the gift of life (Zernov, 1959) and away from the juridical concern with merit which, according to Lossky (1976) is alien to Eastern Christian thought. Conversely, the way in which Ware (1979) quotes from Lewis, in his account of *The Orthodox Way*, is strongly suggestive of a recognition from the Eastern side of a compatibility between Lewis's understanding and the Eastern tradition. The full extent of this compatibility will be demonstrated in the discussion of aspects of the Eastern tradition in the rest of this chapter.

While Eastern Christian writers, such as Lossky (1976), often stress the incompatibility between the Western tradition and the Eastern, this appears to be an exaggeration. It is possible for the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994) to state both Western and Eastern interpretations on point after point without seeming to present totally opposed understandings. And Maloney (1983) recounts how, on Mt Athos, he was given a copy of the Greek translation of *The Spiritual Warfare* by the Tridentine Catholic writer, Scupoli, with the explanation that this would expose him to something typically Eastern! But Zernov (1959) observes that the difference between Catholic and Protestant, which appears so marked from within the West, is not that noticeable from the Eastern perspective in the light of the shared characteristics by which they diverge from the East. This comment goes beyond outward differences in practice, and touches such key theological issues as the understanding of salvation, of sin and merit, and of the relationship between the unity of the Godhead and the distinction between the Persons of the Trinity (Lossky, 1976). While it is true that these differences are expressed in practical differences in spirituality, it is not clear that the Eastern and Western approaches are as dichotomous as is suggested. Certainly the affinities of Eastern saints, like Nicolas Cabasilas and Tikhon of Zadonsk, with Western theology (Maloney, 1983), and the example of the new Catholic catechism, would seem to suggest otherwise and to give grounds for the conclusion of Frank (1999), that the theological tradition of the East can be seen as a particular charism and gift to the Church which can nourish all Christians. That there is a difference in emphasis is not denied by Frank and it is in this light that the particular characteristics of Eastern Christianity, and their connection with CS Lewis, will be explored. In some areas the difference may be more acute than in others but, especially as they are reflected in the work of Lewis, there is no evidence of the irreconcilable division which Lossky suggests exists, almost as a spiritual-anthropological reflection of the Great Schism on the ecclesiastical level.

In view of what has been noted elsewhere regarding the development of modernity in the West, it might seem that modernism, or the Scholastic sources of modern thought, could be seen as the point of division between the Christianity of East and West. While this may be

some validity in this assessment, Behr-Sigel (1992), from the Eastern side, and Maloney (1983), from within Western Catholicism, concur in seeing in Augustine a crucial figure in the divergence of Eastern and Western ways of experiencing and thinking about God and the world. Maloney highlights the commonality between the Christianity of East and West by stating, amongst other points, that 'nine out of ten times' Augustine could be labelled as an Eastern Christian. Despite this, he affirms the need felt by many Western Christians for

"a spiritual vision to offset the Augustinian Platonism that has cluttered up Western Christianity with an un-Christian separation of nature and supernature and with a heavy dichotomy between the human body and the soul, the world of matter and spirit, the secular and sacred." (Maloney, 1983:1)

Behr-Sigel (1992:4-5), from the Eastern perspective, is more respectful with regard to Augustine, although highlighting "his anti-Pelagianism which has exercised a deep and sometimes tyrannical influence over the theological thinking and spirituality of the West". But she stresses that "Augustine, putting aside this point of controversy, was the great mediator that allowed the theology of the Greek Fathers to pass from the East to the West". This mediatorial role of Augustine is questioned by Bourke (1976) but the dual point of commonality allied with significant divergence is underlined by Behr-Sigel, as much as by Maloney. Behr-Sigel places the major responsibility for East-West divergence elsewhere when she states: "In medieval and modern Europe the influence of the Fathers has been unquestionably eclipsed by other spiritual currents". It is plain that the allusion here is to Aquinas, Scholasticism, and the modern tradition in Western thought which has its roots in Thomism in particular and Scholasticism in general. In this, the place of rationalism is a key issue and it is thus appropriate that this should be the first of the aspects of the Eastern tradition to be evaluated in relation to the West and the postmodernism which was to emerge in the West in the wake of the modern age.

4.2 Eastern Christianity versus modern thought I: rationalism

The link between Scholasticism and rationalism, and between rationalism and modern thought, is a point of central importance to Eastern polemicists such as Vladimir Lossky.

But, in the same vein as Behr-Sigel and Maloney, Lossky (1976) traces the rationalism of Western thought back, beyond the Western Middle Ages, to Augustine. Lossky, like Behr-Sigel, cites the Pelagian controversy in describing the divergence in the modes of thought of Eastern and Western Christianity, and the role of Augustine in this. Lossky accuses Augustine of distorting the issues by imposing on them a binary-logic which is both inflexible and rationalistic in its application:

"The fundamental error of Pelagius was that of transposing the mystery of grace on to a rational plane, by which process grace and liberty, realities of the spiritual order, are transformed into two mutually exclusive concepts which then have to be reconciled, as if they were two objects exterior to one another. St Augustine took his stand on the same rational ground, where there was no possibility of the question ever being resolved." (Lossky, 1976:196)

St John Cassian, participated in the debate and, from the Eastern perspective, opposed both sides of what he understood to be a false dichotomy. Lossky notes that his position "was interpreted, on the rational plane, as a semi-pelagianism, and was condemned in the West" whereas, in contrast, "Eastern tradition has always asserted simultaneity in the synergy of divine grace and human freedom" (Lossky, 1976:198-9). The Eastern complaint is that Western Christian rationalism is incapable of allowing that salvation is 'all of grace' while at the same time affirming that human action has a vital role. Lewis's position on this issue is of interest in that it reflects his acceptance of the Eastern notion of divine-human synergy and of its anti-rationalist recourse to 'mystery', which will be referred to a little later:

"The Bible really seems to clinch the matter when it puts the two things together into one amazing sentence. The first half is, 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling' - which looks as if everything depended on us and our good actions: but the second half goes on, 'for it is God who worketh in you' - which looks as if God did everything and we nothing. I am afraid that is the sort of thing we come up against in Christianity. I am puzzled but I am not surprised." (Lewis, 1955:129)

There are counter-arguments to the charges, especially that of rationalism, which are directed against St Augustine. The priority accorded to Augustine as lover over Augustine as thinker (Versfeld, 1990) is an important here. But it was in the work of the next great

intellectual-saint of the West, Thomas Aquinas, that a Christian rationalism came to fruition. There is as much cause as in the case of St Augustine to dispute a simplistic evaluation of Aquinas as a rationalist, for this is to ignore the mystic St Thomas (Versfeld, 1990; Frank, 1999). The theological-philosophical work of Thomas Aquinas is commonly regarded as embodying a rational approach to establishing positive knowledge in the theological sphere, with his treatment of the 'proofs for the existence of God' providing the most well-known example. However, one of the most prominent commentators on Aquinas states, that in relation to God, "philosophic reflection gives us knowledge of what He is not rather than of what He is" (Copleston, 1955:46), and the famous 'proofs' of God's existence "only say something primarily about the things which fall within the field of experience", which point beyond themselves (Copleston 1955:44). These points will be pursued later in relation to negative theology but, in the context of rationalism, Copleston (1955) cautions that Thomist 'rationalism' cannot simply be equated with later, modern rationalism. As argued previously, though, a relationship of ancestry does pertain between them, and this is of relevance to the present study. Modern Western thought, with its commitment to the exclusive Aristotelian axiom, 'A is not non-A', which it inherited from Scholasticism, but without the balance with other factors which it enjoyed in Thomism, was always bound to pursue the reductionism of the 'either-or' imperative. The earlier reference of Sardar to Indian logic is worth recalling at this point. Eastern Christianity did not develop a finely textured system comparable with that of Indian logic but, with regard to its negative theology, its apophatic 'deconstruction' of the pretensions of rational knowledge also represents a sophisticated intellectual technique. This method, like Indian logic, was developed centuries before the systematic intellectual constructions of Western Scholasticism - or those of modernity, which it could be argued, was the ungrateful, illegitimate offspring of Scholasticism. Thus, in this respect, 'premodern' Eastern Christianity, demonstrates some capacity to cope with the postmodern challenge to reason which Schrag (1992) describes.

According to Lossky (1976), the characteristic Eastern Christian response to the apparent contradictions within faith and theology, is not to seek a rational resolution in terms of dialectical logic as in the Western tradition. Neither has it been to attempt to encompass them in a non-linear, geometrical logic as in Indian thought but, rather, it was to accept them, as mysteries. It is noteworthy that Ware's (1979) presentation of Eastern theology begins with "God as Mystery" as its first chapter. If, for example, in the issue of synergy already discussed in relation to Lewis, we ask how we comprehend the simultaneous assertions that salvation is purely due to divine grace but that human will and effort is essential to salvation, the answer is that there is a mystery, the opposed elements of which are both to be acknowledged as true even though it is beyond the capacity of the human rational faculty to comprehend their simultaneous truth. One is struck here by the similarity to the conclusions of the postmodernism of Feyerabend (1988) with regard to the 'incommensurability' which exists between, for example, the cognitive underpinnings of Western and Chinese medicine, both of which can demonstrate results which show that they work in practice. The implicit thrust of Feyerabend's book, like that of Kosko (1993), is the failure of the dichotomous logic of Western rationality. In view of this, and the criticism of Lossky (1976), the role of rational thought in religious experience requires careful reflection. Murray (1964) describes the inevitable process by which the living-experiential knowledge of Yahweh, in the Old Testament, and of Christ in the New Testament, had to be transposed to the rational-intellectual plane in the face of challenges from those who questioned the interpretation of that experience. In the first phase this was done by the Church Fathers in the formulation of the doctrines and creeds of the Church. The affirmations of Lewis (1975c) regarding the creeds indicate that he took no issue with this process. But Murray continues by describing the inevitability of the next phase, pursued in Scholasticism in general but especially by Aquinas, in which doctrine was formulated into a theological system. At this point what needs to be noted is not only the resistance to, or at least the lack (for the most part), of Scholastic-type systematism within the Eastern Christian tradition, but also the response of Lewis. In a passage which will be dealt with more fully later in this chapter, Lewis (1967:100) writes, with reference to the teaching of

Jesus, that "systems cannot keep up with that darting illumination". This view of Lewis would seem to accord with the notion of 'mystery' Furthermore, particularly in the light of the observation of Griffiths (1979) that Lewis did not care much for Aquinas, it does not seem to be pressing this statement of Lewis too far if we apply it to the knowledge of God in general. All this is relevant to the case which is to be made for the Eastern Christian tradition, and hence also for Lewis, to be regarded as providing an alternative to modern rationalism and therefore a resource for the formulation of a postmodern Christian response. The differences between the Eastern and the Western traditions, particularly post-Scholastic, are also significant to the extent that there has been continuity in the West between Scholasticism and modernism. It is necessary, though, to re-iterate the need for caution in the evaluation of figures such as St Augustine and St Thomas. In the case of Aquinas, alongside his mysticism and the context which it provides for his rational philosophy, we must set the practical outcome of his mystical experience, which was to declare all his philosophical-theology to be straw (Versfeld, 1990). On the other hand, as is evident in the case of Lewis, it must be noted that opposition to rationalism can be allied with an strict commitment to rationality. In his theological fantasy of heaven and hell, Lewis (1972) describes the self-inflicted damnation of a modernist bishop as precisely the consequence of his failure to employ his rational faculty. Similarly, in his spiritual-philosophical autobiography, *The Pilgrim's Regress* (Lewis 1977), it is the sword of the personified Lady Reason which drives the pilgrim unwillingly towards truth. In the scales of deconstructionist postmodernism, this commitment to rationality would be tried and found wanting (see Robinson, 1999), but it is not the purpose of this thesis to demonstrate that Lewis, or the Eastern Christian tradition, conforms at every point to some 'canon' of postmodernism established by Nietzsche or any of his successors. The rationalistic systems of modern thought, grounded in the autonomy of the rational human subject are in a state of collapse, but, from a non-Christian perspective, Sardar (1998) provides a convincing case for rejecting nihilistic anti-rationalism as the only alternative. If Lewis upholds a more restrained version of the claims of reason, then this is deserving of consideration as an alternative in the face of the 'end of modernity'. But, even in the case of Aquinas, Copleston

(1955) affirms the strict limits which St Thomas understood to apply to the exercise of reason in practice, and this is explicitly confirmed by Lewis (1960; 1981f) too. With regard to the link between Lewis and the Eastern tradition, we find there the same principle: reason is not discounted but is subordinated in Eastern Christian thought to the higher spiritual faculty, as is shown in the affirmation in the *Mystagogy* of St Maximus the Confessor that the soul enters together with reason into contemplation in the Spirit and into the presence of the Logos Himself (Frank, 1999).

4.3 Eastern Christianity versus modern thought II: substantialism

To return to the complaint of St Augustine's alleged rationalism, we find that there are other aspects of Augustinianism which can be linked to the modes of thought of modernity which have been subjected to such sustained attack recently. Lossky (1976) notes a difference between the Eastern and Augustinian understandings of the *logoi*, the 'divine ideas' of creatures. In Eastern thought these are not, as in Augustinianism, the eternal principles of creatures which are contained within the divine essence itself, as part of the very being of God. Instead, Lossky argues, the specifically Eastern distinction between the essence and the energies of God supports a different conception: "In the thought of the Greek Fathers the divine ideas are more dynamic and intentional in nature" (Lossky, 1976:95), and this is expressed in the actual term *theletike ennoia*, 'thought-will' or, as preferred by Lossky, 'volitional thought'. In this understanding, the *logoi* of creatures are expressions and bearers of the divine energies which eternally irradiate the creation. Thus an 'idea' is understood as a divine willing, embodying the Holy Spirit and subject to the choice and the intentionality of God, and is not an eternally existing essence within God. From this distinction, it can be argued that there is a relationship between the Augustinian notion and the substantialist understanding of the nature of concepts in modern thought, with the link between the two being provided by the Scholasticism of the Middle Ages. The difference between Thomist Aristotelianism and Augustinian Platonism should not be exaggerated: Versfeld (1990:48), in his study of Augustine, refers to Aquinas as 'the most reputable of Augustinians'. The philosophy of moderate realism espoused by Aquinas did, however, represent a decided

weakening of the hold of the Platonic Forms on Western Christian thought. Concepts were understood to be formed by an empirical and inductive process on the basis of forms which were immanent in the creation (Copleston, 1955). In Aristotle's thought God too was immanent in the world so the conceptualisation of the 'forms' of the species of things, within the world, represented a discovery of elements of the divine mind. In Thomism's appropriation of Aristotle, however, the immanence of the Aristotelian God was offset by the Christian-Platonic heritage. So, although the 'form' of a species could be apprehended inductively, because it was immanent in its members in the world, nevertheless the 'forms' originated beyond the world of experience in the transcendent divine mind - and thus we return to the eternal ideas of Augustine.

In Thomism, therefore, the conceptualising faculty operates empirically, by generalising from the data of experience, and what is grasped in this process of induction is the 'form' of each created species of thing. Each concept thus formed in the human mind is derived from the pattern in the divine mind, admittedly as only a dim representation of it, but still possessing a degree of substantiality as a representation. There is a chasm of difference between the substantialist concepts of Thomist epistemology and the superficially similar understanding of concepts in the constructivist psycho-epistemology of the twentieth century (Chalmers, 1982; Devitt, 1991). In both there is a focus on the human mind as the active agent in the process of conceptualisation, but in Thomism this is a process of *discovering* what is present within the world. In constructivism it is merely a process of construction: the human mind makes its own meanings, and though these constructed meanings may be shared with others, this common understanding does not result from independent discovery of real 'presences' immanent in the world. Rather, it derives from a joint process of construction of meaning, whose source lies primarily within those doing the construction.

The divine 'volitional thoughts' of the Eastern Christian understanding are no less 'metaphysical' than the eternal *logoi* of creatures in the Augustinian-Thomist Western epistemological tradition. But, despite the influence of Greek thought in the Eastern

tradition also, and as Lossky (1976) points out, there is a dynamic quality in the Eastern understanding which contrasts with the static quality of the 'forms' of Western Scholastic epistemology. This is linked with a further difference in the way that the two traditions understand nature itself. Lossky (1976) expounds the Eastern Christian view that the matter of this world is suffused with the rays of the divine energies which radiate eternally from the divine essence. This implies, as Zernov (1959) points out, that matter is spirit-bearing; and thus Maloney (1983) can criticise the Augustinian-inspired Western view for its 'un-Christian' separation of spirit and matter. In contrast to the Eastern view, Von Balthasar (1997) explains how Western Scholasticism established the principle of the self-subsistence of created nature. The Scholastic understanding did not accord the material world an Aristotelian co-eternity with God, but allowed it a relative autonomy bestowed by God. Thus, if the Eastern and Western views are compared, we find that the former has an understanding of an intimate, continuing interrelationship of God and nature, spirit and matter. According to this Eastern view, true knowledge of the world is only perceived in the experience of contemplation, in which the *logoi* of created things, their divine 'thought-wills', are apprehended in the context of an existential reliance on the Spirit of God (Ware, 1987). There is a gulf between this and the inductive conceptualisation of the objects of the self-subsisting natural world, in Scholastic and modern empiricism.

The differences in the Eastern and Western Christian understandings of the questions of the nature of the created world, and the ways in which it may be known, is of a dual significance in relating Christianity to postmodernism. On the one hand, the rational knowledge of the world, and the substantialist notion of the concepts which are formed of the world, expose the Western Christian understanding to the deconstruction which is described elsewhere in this thesis. On the other, the modern materialist model of the world, which has its ancestry, even if this is in the nature of a bastard-descent, in the Scholastic principle of the self-subsistence of created nature, is losing its hold on the West. What might very broadly be described as the 'deconstructive' treatment of modern science by Kuhn (1970) and Feyerabend (1988), has been matched by the various manifestations of a constructive

postmodernism to be found, for example, in the papers edited by Griffin (1988) in the *Re-enchantment of Science*. This has as its subject matter the re-enchantment of the world more than of science. With regard to this second aspect, the Eastern Christian understanding of the world, as described above may, as Maloney (1983) implies, have, in a new era, an appeal which the modern worldview and its Scholastic progenitor lack. It is not possible to give a definitive assessment of the position of Lewis regarding this issue but some indication of his sympathies may be provided by his many friendships with followers of Rudolf Steiner, whose 'Anthroposophy' involves a very similar understanding of the relationship between spirit and matter to that of the Christian East. It is true that Lewis maintained an ongoing 'war' (Harwood, 1979) against principles of Steiner which contradicted orthodox Christian beliefs, but he implicitly commends Steiner's position with regard to natural science (Lewis, 1978). In the conclusion to the third book of his science-fiction trilogy Lewis (1945) portrays a scene in which the spirit-matter dichotomy, of which Maloney (1983) complains, is dramatically abrogated in a distinctly Anthroposophical (or Eastern Christian?) manner. It might be objected that this is a work of fiction, and a fantasy at that, but Lewis would hardly promote a position to which he was opposed, even if it were in a work of fiction. In Part III of this thesis, these issues which arise out of the consideration of the nature of concepts and the relation of spirit to matter will be included in the detailed discussion of affirmative postmodernism. In this regard it must be noted that Anthroposophy is classed by Steyn (1994) as part of the broad phenomenon of constructive (or affirmative) postmodernism.

4.4 Eastern Christianity versus modern thought III: the human subject

One of the central pillars of modern thought is the autonomy and substantiality of the rational human subject (Gamble, 1981). The whole edifice of 'certain' scientific and ethical knowledge in modernity was predicated on the rational subject who was somehow able, from some 'metaphysically privileged' vantage-point, to stand apart from the universe and contemplate it objectively (Snyder, 1988). Descartes' *Cogito ergo sum* expressed this confidence in the human self as the irreducible reality of human experience. This sacred

cow of modernity received short shrift from Nietzsche's critical analysis which concluded that the belief in a central core of human identity is a myth, nothing more than a mirage produced by a linguistic habit:

"There is thinking; consequently there is that which thinks - that is [all that] Descartes' argument comes to ... merely a formulation of our grammatical habit, which posits a doer for what is done" (Nietzsche, quoted in Robinson, 1999:23).

The Nietzschean deconstruction of the subjective self is, as has already been pointed in a previous chapter, a major theme of postmodern theory in the second half of the twentieth century. The Derridean attack on the notion of 'presence', as reality behind words, has in Nietzsche its source, in this instance directed against the idea of the human self as a 'presence' behind actions and self-referential talk. To those nurtured on liberal modern thought, this view, whether from the postmodern side or from the corresponding understanding in Buddhism, is likely to be met with profound disbelief or horror. Christians in the modern West, too, are likely to perceive this as an attack on a central pillar of their worldview. But the statement of Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow conveys an Eastern Christian understanding of the self which is very different:

"All creatures are balanced upon the creative word of God, as if upon a bridge of diamond; above them is the abyss of divine infinitude, below them that of their own nothingness" (quoted in Ware, 1979:57).

The 'presence' of the human self is so ephemeral that it is only the moment-by-moment, continuing creative action of God which stands between it and non-existence, and even then its substantiality is minimal. The comment from Lewis (1955) below, on this ephemerality of individual human 'presence', illustrates not only his affinity with the understanding of Philaret but also how closely the postmodern deconstruction of the autonomous subject is approached (as well as indicating the divergence between the two positions). This statement, which is the climax of Lewis's popularisation of traditional Christian theology, is reached in his discussion of the natural condition and the potential of the human self:

"... our real selves are all waiting for us in [Christ]. It is no good trying to be 'myself' without Him. The more I resist Him and try to live on my own, the more I become dominated by my own heredity and upbringing and surroundings and natural desires. In fact what I so proudly call 'Myself' becomes merely the meeting place for trains of events which I never started and which I cannot stop. ... I am not, in my natural state, nearly so much of a person as I would like to believe: most of what I call 'me' can be very easily explained" (Lewis, 1955:187-188).

If we leave aside, for the moment, the teleological assertion of the potentiality of the self in Christ, it will be seen that we have here a similar ephemerality of the human self to that portrayed by Philaret of Moscow. Lewis's description of the self as the 'meeting place', a mere point of intersection, of processes which are independent of, and prior to the self, is a powerful refutation of the notion of the autonomous subject which is so crucial to modernity (see eg Gamble, 1981). The Christian view of the natural self, stated by Philaret and expounded by Lewis, is as 'empty' as that in Buddhism (Clasquin, 1997) or in deconstructionist postmodern theory. It is true that the whole Christian promise of salvation, alluded to in the reference to the human self's potential, sounds a very different note. This is described by Lewis, echoing the Eastern Christian soteriological focus on the imparting of divine life (eg Zernov, 1959), as consisting in the granting of a substantive self. However, this is the potential and not the actual, natural human condition. And, in any event, its substantiality continues to be entirely derivative and dependent on divine Being, as described by Philaret. Thus the 'emptiness' of the human self is only a secondary issue in the present argument. Beyond the debate about the autonomy of the self there is the question of the realistically conceived 'Presence' of God. With regard to the question of how this view of Lewis and Eastern Christianity relates to postmodernism, it is important to recognise that in major traditions within Hinduism the autonomous human self is discounted in an even more radical manner, while at the same time the monistically conceived divine presence is still subject to the postmodern deconstruction of metaphysics and 'presence' which is discussed in the next section of this chapter. In the same way, the Eastern Christian tradition (and Lewis too) with its strongly realist conception of God, might be regarded as being vulnerable to the deconstructionist attack. Two points must be noted in this regard,

however: firstly it must be stated again that the argument of this thesis is not aimed at demonstrating that Eastern Christian thought, and that of Lewis, is entirely compatible with postmodern theory (in particular that of Derrida); but, secondly, the theology of Eastern Christianity is such that it can be argued that Eastern Christian thought, and hence that of Lewis, is in important respects unaffected by the factors which have precipitated the collapse in confidence of modern thought.

4.5 Eastern Christianity versus modern thought IV: apophaticism

The apophatic approach to the knowledge of God is identified by Eastern writers as especially characteristic of the East. Ware (1979:16) states, "To point at the *mysterium tremendum*, we need to use negative as well as positive statements ... Without this use of the way of negation, of what is termed the apophatic approach, our talk about God becomes gravely misleading". This is accepted within Western theology also, although it would be pointed out by Eastern polemicists that this understanding was derived from the East, from the Greek Fathers and especially from Pseudo-Dionysius (Bouyer, 1989). As Ware indicates, though, apophaticism is determinative not only in the theology but also the spirituality of the Eastern tradition. He quotes Evagrius's maxim that 'prayer is a laying aside of thoughts' (Ware, 1979:163), before explaining how the most well-known example of Eastern practice, the 'Jesus Prayer', is in fact intended as a means of apophatic prayer. But Lossky (1976) stresses repeatedly how the *theology* of the East is pre-eminently apophatic. This is reflected in his book in which (after an introductory discussion on the intimate relation of dogmatic and mystical theology) his first chapter on Eastern theology is titled 'The Divine Darkness' paralleling the opening chapter on 'God as Mystery' in Ware (1979). As Lossky goes on to discuss each major aspect of Eastern theology, he repeatedly notes the strongly apophatic character of the manner in which the doctrines are understood. For example, regarding the doctrine of the Trinity, he states it is essential to understand it as being formulated in terms of negation, otherwise it would "submit the Trinity to a category of Aristotelian logic, that of relation [whereas] understood apophatically, the relation of origin describes the difference but nevertheless does not indicate the manner of

the divine processions" (Lossky, 1976:54-5). According to Lossky a fundamental concern of the East in the controversy concerning the addition of the *filioque* to the Nicene Creed, and the doctrine of the double procession of the Holy Spirit, has always been to safeguard the apophatic character of the doctrine of the Trinity from a rationalising tendency to assert claims to positive knowledge of the ineffable. With regard to Scholasticism, though, Lossky (1976) argues that it was Aquinas who, like Augustine on the issue of faith and works in the Pelagian controversy, transposed the distinction between apophatic negation and cataphatic affirmation to the rational plane and there sought a rational resolution between them: even in his use of the method of negation, Aquinas exhibits a rationalism which is contrary to the Eastern approach. In transferring the distinction between negative and affirmative theology to the plane of dialectic, Aquinas thereby created an antinomy which had to be resolved by synthesising them into a single method of knowing. The negative method is incorporated as a corrective to affirmation.

"Thus, negations correspond to the *modus significandi*, to the always inaccurate means of expression; affirmations to the *res significata*, to the perfection which we wish to express, which is in God after another fashion than it is in creatures." (Lossky, 1976:26)

Lossky then concludes by asking, "Does not Dionysius say time and again that apophatic theology surpasses cataphatic?" and then answers his own question by stating that a reading of the Dionysian *Mystical Theology* will reveal to us the "true nature of that apophaticism which constitutes the fundamental characteristic of the whole theological tradition of the Eastern Church".

In his poem, 'Footnote to all prayers', Lewis, (1964a) embodies the apophatic theological method in a way which seems to accord with the Eastern understanding of apophaticism rather than with the Thomist use of the negative as a corrective to positive theology, as described by Lossky. In Lewis's poem it is not 'corrected', positive natural knowledge by which we make contact with God, through analogy. Instead, the negative method remains pre-eminent, as Lossky (1976) affirms of the Dionysian apophaticism. To Lewis, it is only

the gracious initiative of God, in turning our misconceived concepts and prayers to himself, which overcomes the inevitable, blasphemous misuse of natural knowledge by religious humanity. The poem is reproduced here as a whole, in order to convey its full impact:

He whom I bow to only knows to whom I bow
When I attempt the ineffable Name, murmuring *Thou*,
And dream of Pheidian fancies and embrace in heart
Symbols (I know) which cannot be the thing Thou art.
Thus always, taken at their word, all prayers blaspheme,
Worshipping with frail images a folk-lore dream,
And all men in their praying, self-deceived, address
The coinage of their own unquiet thoughts, unless
Thou in magnetic mercy to Thyself divert
Our arrows, aimed unskilfully, beyond desert;
And all men are idolaters, crying unheard
To a deaf idol if Thou take them at their word.

Take not, oh Lord, our literal sense. Lord, in Thy great,
Unbroken speech our limping metaphor translate.

Apart from trying to establish the association of Lewis and the Eastern Christian tradition with regard to apophaticism, we must go on to identify the implications of their apophaticism with regard to postmodernism. In doing so it is necessary to note that postmodern writers on 'premodern' Christian apophaticism, such as Jacques Derrida and Don Cupitt, do not restrict themselves to the East although, with regard to the West, their point of focus, on Meister Eckhart, is rather atypical of the Western tradition.

Reference was made earlier in this dissertation to the interest of Jacques Derrida in negative theology. This is of particular interest in view of the parallels regarding deconstructive strategies which are traced between the work of Derrida and the writings of Buddhist authors such as Nagarjuna and Dogen (for example by le Roux, 1996a, 1996b). But, as mentioned previously, Derrida displayed a deep fascination with Christian 'deconstructive' theology in some of his works, for example devoting a lengthy paper, 'How to avoid speaking: denials' (Derrida, 1989), to this topic. Derrida is careful to emphasise that what he himself writes is not 'negative theology' even if this term is taken in a broad sense. He cites the manner in which negative theology "seems to reserve, beyond all positive predication, beyond all negation, even beyond Being, some hyperessentiality, a being beyond Being" (Derrida, 1989:7-8). This is because of "that wager of hyperessentiality that one finds at work in both Dionysius and Meister Eckhart" which, despite the paradoxical expressions of darkness replacing light, or of luminous darkness, promises "the immediacy of a presence" in mystic union with God. As will be shown later in this chapter, Derrida's whole effort is directed against any 'presence' behind the words of our discourse - whether the presence of God or any other. Therefore apophatic theology's unknowing, the void which is the absence of light and of discourse, is not identifiable with Derrida's project of deconstruction, despite the affinities which may be traced. Evidently, though, this does not settle the issue for Derrida because he continues to wrestle with it for over sixty pages.

There are a number of issues which need to be addressed, in considering apophaticism and the opinion of Derrida, in the light of the argument of this thesis relating Eastern Christianity and postmodernism. Once more it must be asked: are we setting up a postmodernist 'canon' consisting of 'authorities' such as Derrida? If so, then is this not contrary to the entire tenor of the thought of these theorists? And if not, then who is the authority who can argue the adequacy or inadequacy of Eastern Christian thought in a situation in which modernity is in decline? It would seem, once again, that this adequacy or capacity has to be judged by the extent to which it is free from the modernist 'certainties', of rationalism, scientism, autonomy of the self, and so on, which are said, in a postmodern

situation, to have collapsed under the weight of their own inner contradictions. Derrida may choose to differ on the 'presence' posited in Eastern Christian thought, but this cannot of itself constitute a judgement that Eastern Christianity has been found wanting in the scales of postmodernism. Further points relevant to this whole question are raised by Kevin Hart (1989) in his *Trespass of the Sign*, in which Derrida's continuing but ambivalent relationship with negative theology is discussed at length. Hart notes that Derridean deconstruction is commonly understood either as a refinement of the Nietzschean doctrine that God is dead, or as a displaced negative theology. In his opinion neither is correct because deconstruction is directed at metaphysics not theology as such. Rather, in Hart's view (1989:xi), "deconstruction is not an attack against theology but an answer to the theological demand for a non-metaphysical theology," but, although "deconstruction may not be a negative theology ... negative theology may deconstruct positive theology". This last conclusion, it should be noted, is exactly the point of apophatic theology. From Derrida's work, therefore, Hart would support the suggestion that the Eastern Christian tradition, in making apophaticism the pre-condition of all its theology and spirituality, can be regarded as postmodern in the same way as elements of the Buddhist tradition (as discussed previously). But this does not by any means settle all the questions which Derrida's work raises.

4.6 Eastern Christianity versus modern thought V: the divine 'presence'

Cupitt (1998) takes up Derrida's work, as well as Hart's commentary on it, in order to develop further the notion of a 'non-metaphysical theology', which Hart highlights as the theological response to the conclusions of Derrida's work. Hart suggests that,

"In general terms, deconstruction helps to clarify the concept 'non-metaphysical theology', while its strategy of using language 'under erasure' illuminates particular moves and attitudes in mystical texts." (Hart 1989:xi)

The last phrases of this quote are somewhat cryptic but the major part of Cupitt's *Mysticism after Modernity* (1998) amounts to an exegesis of these words. To Cupitt the 'supernatural' is merely the language which constitutes the formulative environment of the whole of

human experience; 'mystical experience' is nothing but a form of writing (one which is subversive of dominant discourses); and the deconstruction of metaphysics is also the death of the old God. The only role which the term 'God' is allowed in religion 'after God', the title of his other recent work (Cupitt, 1997), is as a consciously imagined construction. As described in a previous chapter, the third element of postmodern religion according to Cupitt, after 'the blissful void' and 'solar living', is 'the Eye of God' by which the celebrants of this religion adopt a 'God's eye' view of life in its plurality and flux. But this is the viewpoint of a God who is absent: the assertion of Meister Eckhart (Cupitt's preferred mystical writer) that God is non-being is taken at its face-value by Cupitt, which is entirely consistent in an author who maintains that face-value (surface) is the only value that there is. Cupitt regards himself as following Derrida in this regard, but here he differs from Hart who states that, on his reading, it is not correct to take Derridean deconstruction "as a refinement of the Nietzschean doctrine that God is dead" (Hart, 1989:x). What is at issue here, in this difference between Cupitt and Hart on the nature of a non-metaphysical theology, is the related question of realism versus non-realism in respect of God. Or we might rephrase this as, 'the question of the presence or absence of God'. As we will see, the issue of God's presence/absence can be understood in different senses. To Cupitt the absence of God is an absolute absence and therefore the presence of God is negated in a final and full sense. But the 'absence' of God may also be understood in the context of the inability of any intellectual system of human construction to hold God's presence or, to extend the image of Phillips (1956), we may put it that, if we construct a mental box in which to hold God, we will find that our box is empty. This point is elucidated by Hart (1989) in his treatment of the Derridean theme of the function of the signs of our discourse.

Hart's argument begins from a discussion of Dante's conversation with Adam in the *Paradiso*, which is reproduced fully here as Hart's account is already a summary of Dante:

"A redeemed soul, entirely consonant with God's will, Adam knows Dante's thoughts with far more certainty than Dante can know the most elementary truth; his perception of the poet's mind is immediate, unhindered by language; and when he begins to

answer, explaining the true cause of the Fall, Adam's hermeneutic mastery is no less complete. ... Although Adam's trespass was chiefly moral in character it was also a trespass of the linguistic sign - a desire for unmediated knowledge - and the sign of this disobedience is none other than the mutability of all signs. ... Without the presence of God, in Paradise or on earth, there can be no hope of understanding oneself, others or texts. One would be lost in a maze of signs, with no possibility of distinguishing true from false." (Hart, 1989:3-4)

As Hart immediately points out, Dante has drawn heavily from Thomism but the roots of his account can be traced further back to Augustine, and to St Paul and Greek metaphysics. It is beyond the scope of this article to provide a full treatment of this topic and thus a few key points must suffice. Snyder (1988), in summarising the work of Gianni Vattimo, the Italian philosopher of nihilistic postmodernism, underlines a crucial thought which he finds in Nietzsche: while Nietzsche certainly rejected the Christian God, his announcement of the death of God was not so much directed at the religious but at the 'enlightened' modern people of his time. They continued to cling to a view of the world and values which was predicated on the existence of the God whom they had already discarded as a superstitious myth. On this understanding Nietzsche was not so much drawing attention to the absence of God, which was already a feature of the 'Enlightenment paradigm', but issuing a challenge to be consistent and take its consequences to heart. Modernity had cut the taproot of its medieval Christian origins, but its humanism represented the attempt to keep the fruit. Nietzschean ethics expresses his imperative of achieving consistency. That consistency makes Nietzschean ethics postmodern in relation to a modernity which had abandoned the Christian God while retaining Christian ethics. But equally, in relation to the issue of signs, modernity always contained the seeds of its own destruction, because it had failed to take to heart what Dante had drawn attention to. It presumed to retain the old idea of truth in order to make sense of understanding "oneself, others and texts". But this required them to negotiate signs in a way that at bottom could only be based on the presence of a God who was now absent in their paradigm. Thus modernity had always been doomed to suffer deconstruction. So too, perhaps, was the Thomism which had laid the foundations for modern thought. The keystone of Thomism was God. Modern thought collapsed because

it had removed that keystone without realising that it was on this that the whole edifice of its own construction rested. But, perhaps, the keystone itself was inherently and fatally flawed, because the rationalism of Aquinas had overreached itself in the construction of a philosophy of God which constituted the key element in the whole Thomist system. This contrasts with the anti-rationalism, but not irrationality, of the Eastern tradition as summed up in Ware's and Lossky's headings of 'God as mystery' and 'The divine darkness' respectively.

There is a final, highly significant issue on which Hart differs from Cupitt with regard to the deconstruction of metaphysics. Hart (1989:7) cites the Apostle Paul's conclusion to his famous chapter on love. It contains, according to Hart,

"what is, perhaps the single most influential remark on signs and faith. 'In this life we can comprehend God in the mirror of faith' as one common gloss puts it; but another, just as common, places the emphasis elsewhere: 'we can know God only imperfectly, reflected in the mirror of language'."

He goes on to remind us that, for Derrida, signs are incapable of purely and simply representing concepts, either in the strong sense of 're-present', as in idealism, or in the weaker sense of 'standing-for', as in empiricism. This underlines the Pauline point that our comprehension always takes place through a medium, which dims and distorts as the mirrors of Paul's era would have done. What Derrida's work tells us, Hart emphasises, is that there is no unmediated knowledge, no simple presence, on which basis experience can be explained. Then follows a very telling observation by Hart (1989:26&27):

"Similarly, deconstruction can make no claim as to the reality or non-reality of God, but it will come into operation if I use 'God' to ground my account of phenomena: and this is so as long as I regard God as the highest being and the ground of being."

"Deconstruction offers a critique of theism to be sure, but it is directed to the 'ism' rather than the 'theos'; that is, it offers a critique of the use to which 'God' is put, but does not make any claim whatsoever about the *reality* of God. In fact, to the extent which deconstruction is a critique of theism it is also a critique of any discourse which denies there is a God."

It seems that Cupitt undermines his own case in drawing on Derrida and Hart to establish his case for a religion in which God has been discounted as finally and decisively dead in the most obvious sense. But, equally, it is apparent that, in terms of Hart's treatment of the issue, the God who is a philosophical construct, on which to ground a system like Thomism, is dead. Hart traces Thomism's roots back to Augustine, as well as to the Apostle Paul, and to Greek metaphysics. But what can we conclude about an alternative Christian tradition, to which Augustinianism is alien; which drew on Pauline and Greek thought in different ways; which was never subject to Scholasticism as it developed in the Christian West; and which retained a full apophaticism, unlike that of the West where it was domesticated in the service of a positive theology? It would be rash to claim that the arguments presented in this chapter have established the Eastern Christian tradition as immune to the effects of Derrida's deconstructive project, but perhaps its ability to face the postmodern challenge deserves attention, notwithstanding its premodern, or even pre-medieval status. This issue has been discussed at some length here but we must now return to it specifically in connection with the thought of CS Lewis and the role of 'presence'. The notion of 'presence' is highlighted in the use by Payne (1988) of the phrase 'Real Presence' to sum up Lewis's Christian position.

4.7 Eastern Christianity versus modern thought VI: knowledge/passion

Derrida develops Nietzsche's theme of the problematic relation of language to reality but in Michel Foucault we find an exposition of another Nietzschean theme, that of power and its relation to knowledge. As Tarnas (1996) points out, the assertion of Nietzsche that there are no facts, only interpretations, must be understood in the light of his focus on the 'will to power' as basic human motivation. Interpretation, which constitutes our only possible kind of knowledge, is always done on the basis of our interests, themselves expressions of the 'will-to-power'. Foucault (1972) develops this notion further in his discussion of power/knowledge. This view of knowledge strikes at the heart of modern thought's presumption that the autonomous human subject, on the basis of its inherent rationality, is able to attain to objectively true knowledge. This ideal of objective knowledge, an

achievable ideal according to modern thought, especially in its liberal variant, is grounded in the rational capacity of the human knower to discount non-rational contamination by individual or social interests and motives. The contention of Nietzsche and Foucault has received possibly its most significant support in the work of Kuhn (1970) and Feyerabend (1988) on the nature of scientific knowledge. In view of the centrality, to modern thought, of the belief in neutral knowledge, and of the postmodern assertion that knowledge can never be neutral because it will always be an expression of the interests and motives of the knowers, it is of crucial importance to note the way in which the Eastern Christian mystical tradition parallels the postmodern view. The *Philokalia* is a compilation of many centuries of Eastern Christian mystical texts (Palmer et al, tr., 1981) which forms one of the most influential strands within Eastern Christianity (Behr-Sigel, 1992). The various authors comment frequently on the nature of knowledge and, as perhaps we should expect in non-modern discourse, never entertain the notion that knowledge might in any way be neutral. They do not exactly make the Foucauldian power/knowledge identification (although they are not silent on matters relating to this issue) but they do make precisely the same type of connection between love and knowledge which Foucault does in relation to power and knowledge.

One of the central figures of the Philokalic tradition is St Maximus the Confessor and he gives particular attention to these issues concerning knowledge. Firstly, in common with Eastern Christian mysticism as a whole, he places great stress on 'dispassion', which, to him, involves not the denial or destruction of the passions but their right-ordering. It is in this sense that we must understand the ideal of passion-free thought which he upholds. *Impassioned thinking*, which seems very much the same as Foucault's power/knowledge, is not avoided by achieving a state of rational neutrality. In Maximus's understanding this would merely be the 'empty house' of Matthew 12:43-45, which is liable to be filled by seven demons in place of the one which left. It is the positive role of love, in ordering the passions aright, which constitutes passion-free thought and knowledge. In order properly to comprehend what is meant here, we need to stress again that the 'passion-free' state does not

mean exactly what it says. Freedom from disordered passions is achieved through love, the holy passion which must be added to the passions in order to redeem them from their unholy state. It is in this light that we must understand Maximus:

"When the intellect turns its attention to the visible world, it perceives things through the medium of the senses in a way that accords with nature. And the intellect is not evil, nor its natural capacity to form conceptual images of things, nor are the things themselves, nor are the senses, for all are the work of God. What, then, is evil? Clearly it is the passion that enters into the conceptual images formed in accordance with nature by the intellect." ('Centuries on Love' 2:15)

Maximus's vision here is of a world, and of a human capacity to think and form concepts of that world, none of which are problematic in themselves. But it is the passion - the 'interests' and 'will-to-power' - which suffuse knowledge, both as process and as product, which is determinative of human knowing, which is why,

"in this world truth exists in shadows and conjectures [so that] there is need for the blessed passion of holy love" ('Centuries on Love' 3:67).

Although, in many vital ways, the Maximian and deconstructive postmodern understandings of things are poles apart, they concur solidly in asserting, contrary to the modern understanding, that there is no neutral knowledge to be attained by a 'pure' rational capacity of the human epistemological agent. In Eastern Christian epistemology, 'passion' is always implicated in knowledge but the desired state is that in which this passion is "the blessed passion of holy love". This understanding applies not only to the knowledge of God but also of the Creation.

It would be merely be foolish to claim that St Maximus the Confessor, or the other masters of the Eastern Christian mystical tradition, were postmodern theorists before their time. But, once again, it is established that this mystical tradition, like that of Buddhism, has the resources to endure the collapse of modernity.

4.8 Conclusion: Eastern Christianity and the postmodern

In discussing the relation of Eastern Christianity to the postmodern, we have focused in some depth on factors such as apophaticism and deconstruction, and the role of rationalism and the human subject. It has been argued that Western Christianity, because of its association with modernity, which did after all arise out of medieval Western Christendom, is also to that extent unavoidably involved with the 'end of modernity'. The Eastern Christian tradition was never implicated in the rise of modernity although, like all premodern cultures, it could not escape the touch of modernity. However, it appears to have resources within itself, as Buddhism does, to stand outside Western modernity in important respects and hence to face the challenges of postmodernism. It does have to be asked, however, whether it is always a strength to have stood back from developments such as those which occurred in Scholasticism: von Balthasar (1997) raises the question of whether the Eastern Christian understanding of created nature fails, perhaps, to escape fully from the Platonic schema of participation in the divine. The spirit/matter dichotomy, which Maloney (1983) criticises in Western thought, might be seen more positively as the Scholastic achievement of the recognition of the self-subsistence of created nature. It may be that postmodernism has too readily abandoned a part of the Scholastic heritage which may have more to offer than is evident in the form which it took in modern thought. This is a question deserving of further investigation, and is followed up in Chapter Eight.

Another potentially fruitful line of thought, which has been omitted from the discussion in this chapter is the role of tradition, to which is opposed the Enlightenment ideal of the autonomous, individual human reason. Ricoeur's statement that "a human being discovers his finitude in the fact that, first of all, he finds himself within a tradition or traditions" has been quoted earlier. It is this finitude which was implacably ignored in the 'Enlightenment' glorification of humanity as 'the measure of all things' (McGrath, 1990). The consequent collapse of the attempt to maintain the 'metaphysically privileged' position of the autonomous human subject, described by Snyder (1988), has already been dealt with. McGrath's explanation of the comprehension of theological truth, as occurring only from

within a tradition, is postmodern in that it rejects the axiomatic role of the autonomous subject. The crucial role of tradition within Eastern Christianity (Meyendorff, 1978) is obviously significant in this regard, and Louth (1983) develops the application of the hermeneutic significance of tradition, as in Gadamer (1975), to Christian tradition further. Because the role of tradition is not one which is confined to the Christian East, no further attention will be devoted to it in this chapter but, in Chapter Ten, it will be followed up with reference to the writings of Pope John-Paul II and to the thought of Lewis. It must be noted, though, that even at this point no specific mention has been made here of Lewis in connection with tradition because, in fact, he gives little explicit attention to tradition (see Griffiths, 1979). The idea of the broad, ongoing Christian tradition is, however, basic to Lewis's *Mere Christianity* and is more-or-less implicit in his other religious writings.

We can conclude that there is a case to be made for the 'postmodern credentials' of the Eastern Christian tradition and, to the extent that he draws from its resources, for CS Lewis also. In view of the importance of Pseudo-Dionysius to the apophaticism of the Eastern tradition, this conclusion receives significant support from Feyerabend in the closing paragraphs of a work which is dedicated to undermining the modernist understanding of science. It is particularly important in its evaluation of metaphysics. He begins by quoting from Thomas Kuhn:

"I am not suggesting, let me emphasise, that there is a reality which science fails to get at. My point is, rather, that no sense can be made of a reality as it has ordinarily functioned in the philosophy of science.' Here I agree [Feyerabend continues] with the proviso that the more metaphysical notions of reality (such as those proposed by Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagatica) have not yet been disposed of."
(Feyerabend, 1988:272)

The thought of the Areopagite represents one element of commonality with postmodernism, but one which is not peculiar in its influence to Eastern Christianity alone. Similarly, CS Lewis, though strongly influenced by the Eastern tradition, perhaps, extends his thought more widely, and it is to the broader scope of his thought to which we now turn.

CHAPTER FIVE

IDENTIFYING ASPECTS OF THE POSTMODERN IN THE WORK OF CS LEWIS

5.1 Methodological aspects in identifying the 'postmodern' in the work of Lewis

As shown previously, a closer examination of Lewis's conservatism reveals a paradoxical situation in which his 'conservatism' is closely associated with an apparent postmodernism which has nothing in common with the neo-conservatism which Don Cupitt labels 'right postmodernism'. This immediately raises questions about the origins and precise nature of the 'postmodern' aspects in Lewis's work. Lewis's roots in the Romantic movement, with its opposition to 'Enlightenment' modernism, would seem to be obviously implicated. Did the anti-modernist experience, provided through Romanticism, of standing back from the nineteenth century triumph of modernism with its rationalism and scientism and its ideal of 'progress' (see eg King, 1998) allow Lewis a freedom to view modernism critically - as it had in an earlier generation for Nietzsche? Nietzsche had gone beyond the mere anti-modernism of some in the Romantic movement, to arrive at something apparently postmodern (Robinson, 1999). But could something similar also possibly be true of Lewis, whose adult life fell on the other side of the 1914 dividing line which we have identified as crucial in the decline of modernism? Despite his traditionalism Lewis was clearly not ignorant of contemporary authors, particularly in the field of literary criticism (see eg Lewis, 1981a), and from these he would have picked up something of the contagion of the 'malaise of modernity' (Hargreaves, 1994). This would have involved the after-effects on twentieth century intellectuals of both the First and Second World Wars described, for example, by Breisach (1994) and Bradbury (1995) respectively. Eagleton (1996) outlines numerous movements in the field of twentieth century literary criticism, some of which dealt in ideas which are very suggestive of themes which were to emerge as important in late twentieth

century postmodernism. The cataclysmic impact of the World Wars on modernist confidence, as described by Kung (1995) in his account of Barth's postmodernism, would in any case have been complemented by the continuing influence of Romanticism (Day, 1996) and especially that of Nietzsche (Tarnas, 1996). Quite clearly, there can be no question of a simple claim that Lewis had, in the popular sense of prophecy, predicted postmodernism before any sign of it had appeared on the cultural and intellectual horizon. This point will be re-emphasised in the review of particular elements of Lewis's work in this chapter. But there are other senses in which Lewis might be considered a 'prophet of postmodernism' and these will be pursued in what follows also.

The questions aroused by Lewis's paradoxical radicalism and, in particular, his 'postmodernism', find suggestive possibilities for answers in the religious-philosophical works of Lewis. Although other works of Lewis were not ignored in this study, it was in these popular and semi-popular works that a rich source of material, in which Lewis touched on questions and issues of relevance to postmodernism, was found. After some initial preparatory skim-reading it was possible to formulate a provisional systematic approach in which a set of categories was set up, to be used as a framework to 'filter' the work of Lewis and pick out relevant comments. In the process of their application these categories were refined further. Amongst the categories which emerged were, for example, 'Lewis on modern science' and 'Lewis on authorship', and these are included in the main body of this chapter, which constitutes a report on the application of this approach in respect of 'negative' postmodernism. Other categories, which were derived in this way, relate to the spiritual aspects referred to in Chapter Two, and these are incorporated in the discussion in Part III of this thesis. Some comments need to be made regarding the 'harvest' obtained in this way. Firstly, this study is intended to provide a survey of the work of CS Lewis from the perspective of postmodernism: if one or more of the categories which have emerged in the course of this study are followed up in detail these might provide the material for further in-depth research studies. For example, Lewis's association with Anthroposophist friends, despite strong differences, was such that in a major work, *Miracles*, (which touches on

science as well as philosophy) Lewis quotes Owen Barfield, a leading Anthroposophist and life-long friend, on key points (Lewis, 1960). And, in *The Abolition of Man* which he regarded as his most important work, Lewis offers criticisms of modern science along with positive comments on the ideas of Rudolf Steiner, the originator of Anthroposophy, as well as Goethe who was a key source of inspiration for Steiner (Lewis, 1978). A whole new literature has subsequently emerged on a type of postmodern science which displays much of what Lewis appeared to have in mind on the topic. Examples include *Science, Order, and Creativity* (Bohm & Peat, 1987), *The Re-enchantment of Science* (Griffin ed., 1988), *The Creative Cosmos: A Unified Science of Matter Life and Mind* (Laszlo, 1993), *The Wholeness of Nature: Goethe's Way of Science* (Bortoft, 1996), and *The Fire in the Equations: Science Religion and the Search for God* (Ferguson, 1995). The last of these is notable both for the cover-commendations given by scientists of the standing of Stephen Hawking and John Polkinghorne and also for Ferguson's frequent citations of the work of Lewis. None of these works brings in Steiner or Anthroposophy, although Tarnas (1996) links Steiner and Goethe together in the conclusion to his monumental account of the development of Western thought. Tarnas refers to them in his comments on a 'participatory epistemology', which he presents as the basis of a science which will transcend the collapse of modern thought.

There are thus fertile sources for a detailed study on the topic of Lewis, Anthroposophy and the possible nature of a postmodern science, and, indeed, for a variety of different studies on other topics which are identified in this survey of Lewis's work. Although these topics will be dealt with, and at some length in a later chapter in the case of Lewis's relationship to Anthroposophy, those opportunities for further investigation cannot be fully explored within the limits implicit in the title of the present thesis. The objective of this study is to provide evidence for an evaluation of the relationship of Lewis's thought to postmodern theory which will be sufficient to arrive at a conclusion regarding his possibly prophetic role. Therefore, particularly in this chapter, in outlining the results of the investigation of identified categories, the procedure which will be followed will involve the citing of

relevant elements excerpted from Lewis's work together with comment on their implications in terms of postmodernism. No attempt will be made to provide an exhaustive and definitive treatment of what can be detected in Lewis's work in the case of each of these categories. In Chapter Seven, because of the ambivalent nature of the relationship between Lewis's thought and the characteristic features of spiritually-oriented varieties of postmodernism, the discussion is somewhat lengthier. And, as has been mentioned, an in-depth discussion of Lewis's relationship to Anthroposophy will be provided, in Chapter Eight, not only because of the complexity of that relationship but also because of the light which it may throw on the status of Lewis's thought *vis-a-vis* postmodernism.

Another important point, which needs to be dealt with before considering the results of the analysis of Lewis's work, concerns the 'Eastern connection' in Lewis's thought, which has been a focus of the previous chapter. Topics which are covered there, such as the limits of rationalism, the question of 'neutral' knowledge, apophatic 'deconstructionism', and the deconstruction of the autonomous self, might all have been dealt with under the outline of the various aspects of Lewis's work which follows. All of them, though, while of direct relevance to the postmodern debate, may be linked to Lewis's interest in the Eastern Christian tradition - they do not appear to arise directly or exclusively out of Lewis's engagement with the 'malaise of modernity', although they could not but interact powerfully with Lewis's perceptions of other issues which arose out of his reflections on aspects of the modern view of the world. An historical account of the exact process of interaction which occurred between Lewis's sources in Eastern Christianity and his engagement with the contemporary intellectual environment, in which he found himself, is beyond the scope of this study and, in any event, it is unlikely that adequate sources are available to make such a study practically worthwhile. Therefore the question of Lewis's associations with the Eastern Christian tradition has, in this thesis, been treated as part of the background leading up to this chapter and has accordingly been dealt with in the previous chapter. Apart from these reasons, though, the importance of the Eastern tradition's postmodern compatibility is something which needs to be recognised in its own right. This tradition pre-dates not only

the life and work of CS Lewis but also modernity itself. It is appropriate, then, that the dependence of Lewis on this tradition has been indicated in the chapter-structure of this thesis, and it will also have to be fully taken into account in the final evaluation of Lewis's own role in relation to postmodernism.

5.2 A survey of aspects of the postmodern reflected in the work of CS Lewis

While it is generally not 'good form' in academic writing to incorporate too many or too extensive quotations, this canon will be violated in what follows for a particular reason: the excerpts which are reproduced form the primary source from which the major argument of this thesis arises, and they must therefore be made available for direct evaluation and not merely referred to in a digested form. It could be argued that their place nevertheless belongs in an appendix rather than in the main text of the thesis. This possibility was considered but was rejected because 'digested' summaries would generally take up almost as much of the text and would tend to obscure the force of Lewis's thought. In addition this approach served to avoid the disrupting effect, on reading, of having to refer continuously to and fro between text and appendix. As noted previously, the citations from the work of Lewis which are categorised here, are offered with comments, often brief, on their 'postmodernness'. Where appropriate it will be indicated to what extent this 'postmodernism' reflects points of view which were current, in some quarters at least, at the time of Lewis's writing. Although such connections will be pointed out in a number of these categories, this should not be taken too readily as evidence that there is nothing original in Lewis relating to postmodernism. The presentation of these categories will lead up to what, it will be argued, is Lewis's own, particular contribution to a Christian response to the challenge of postmodernism. It must also be borne in mind that, where Lewis displays an accord with contemporary intellectual strands of his social context, these were often not dominant features of the modernist 'Spirit of the Age' of his time. In espousing these positions, which were often seemingly inimical to his conservative position, Lewis was making his protest against the modern *Zeitgeist*. That this protest was called for within the Christian camp, as much as outside of it, may be evident in what follows, for example, in the category of

'science'. It must be added, lastly, that both 'deconstructive' and 'affirmative' postmodernisms will be implicated in the discussion of these categories. Because an outline of the different postmodernisms has been provided in Chapter Two, it will generally not be necessary to spell out where one or the other applies, although this will be done where necessary to underline a point.

5.2.1 On humanism:

One important element of the early modern age's attempt to re-institute the cultural heritage of classical civilisation is summed up in the appropriation of Protagoras's maxim 'Man is the measure of all things' (Tarnas, 1996). This represented a fateful step on the path by which the medieval Christian humanism of St Thomas Aquinas (Copleston, 1955) was transformed into the humanism of early liberal theory, which itself suffered many vagaries of history in the later development of liberal thought and the rise of socialism (Gamble, 1981). But through all the transmutations of modern thought, whether in liberal individualism or the Marxist focus on 'the people', humanity remains in, one way or another, simultaneously the foundation and the apex of modern thought. Lewis was unequivocal in his rejection of this broad, modernist humanism. As important a place as the human race might hold in the love of God, Lewis was forthrightly critical of those who draw the conclusion that this somehow makes humanity the centre of the universe:

"We know that God has visited and redeemed His people, and that tells us just as much about the general character of creation as a dose given to one sick hen on a big farm tells us about the general character of farming in England." (Lewis, 1979c:34)

When Lewis writes, with reference to human nature, that although we can do many nice things with sand, we cannot build on it (Lewis, 1955), he is attacking Marx's 'People' as much as the 'positive human potential of the individual' of much of liberalism. The postmodern 'decentering' of humanity would have unnerved Lewis not a bit. Associated with the denial of this kind of modern anthropocentrism Lewis holds a pessimistic view of 'human potential' which discredits both the optimistic liberal theory of democracy and the

concept of revolution as a means of social justice. With regard to the theory of democracy he writes:

"A great deal of democratic enthusiasm descends from the ideas of people like Rousseau, who believed in democracy because they thought mankind so wise and good that everyone deserved a share in the government. The danger of defending democracy on those grounds is that they're not true. ... The real reason for democracy is just the reverse. Mankind is so fallen that no man can be trusted with unchecked power over his fellows." (Lewis, 1986a:17)

So, despite opposition to the theory of democracy of optimistic humanism, Lewis is a democrat, and this leads him to oppose any kind of political revolution:

"Being a democrat I am opposed to all very drastic and sudden changes in society (in whatever direction) because they never in fact take place except by a particular technique. That technique involves the seizure of power by a small, highly disciplined group of people; the terror and the secret police follow, it would seem, automatically. I do not think any group good enough to have such power." (Lewis, 1982b:106)

This qualified attitude towards the potential of human nature is not original to Lewis at all - he himself describes the origin of his position in the traditional Christian doctrine of the Fall, and his views are quite typical of a large segment of conservatism and conservative liberalism (Gamble, 1981). To this extent they might simply be regarded as anti-modern. But this aspect of Lewis's opposition to the faith in humanity of much modern thought, whether it is directed at the individual or the working class or the nation, exists in Lewis's thought as only one element alongside, for example, his 'deconstructive' approach to the natural human self. And that position, too, is linked with Lewis's views on individual creativity and authorship.

5.2.2 On the creative originality of the individual:

When we address the question of the human individual we touch on one of the most fundamental tenets of the modern worldview which arose with the decline of the Middle Ages (Gamble, 1981). The 'deconstruction' of the autonomous subjective self within the Eastern Christian tradition, and by Lewis, was dealt with in the previous chapter but the

general issue of the nature of the individual was confronted in a particular form by Lewis within his own academic field. He writes against the modern belief in autonomous originality and individual creativity, referring to it as

"the pestilent notion ... that each of us starts with a treasure called 'personality' locked up inside him and that to expand and express this, to guard it from interference, to be 'original', is the main end of life." (Lewis, 1975d:24)

We have here a general extension of the 'deconstruction' of the self, applied to the location of originality within the individual by modern thought. In the same vein Lewis writes sarcastically on the notion of 'creativity' in modern literary criticism:

"What are the key words of modern criticism? *Creative*, with its opposite *derivative*; *spontaneous*, with its opposite *convention*, *freedom*, contrasted with *rules*. Great authors are innovators, pioneers, explorers; bad authors bunch in schools and follow models. Or, again, great authors are always 'breaking fetters' and 'bursting bonds'. They have personality, they are 'themselves'. I do not know whether we often think out the implication of such language into a consistent philosophy; but we certainly have a picture of bad work flowing from conformity and discipleship, and of good work bursting out from certain centres of explosive force - apparently self-originating force - which we call men of genius." (Lewis, 1981a:17-18)

Lewis goes on to comment on how this kind of philosophy of originality is alien to the whole tenor of the New Testament and to argue that it is not even appropriate for it to be applied to the person of Jesus. In place of modernist individualism Lewis points to the experience of God, specifically in relation to moral effort in obeying conscience, as opening up an entirely different evaluation of the 'originality' of the self:

"One of the first results of such an effort is to bring your picture of yourself down to something nearer life-size. And presently you begin to wonder whether you are yet in any full sense, a person at all; whether you are entitled to call yourself 'I' (it is a sacred name). ... You find that what you called yourself is only a thin film on the surface of an unsounded and dangerous sea. But not merely dangerous. Radiant things, delights and inspirations, come to the surface as well as snarling resentments and nagging lusts." (Lewis, 1981f:211)

If we take this together with the deconstruction of the notion of the self referred to in Lewis

(1955), we may catch something of Lewis's vision of the human self. On the one hand it is as 'empty' as the Buddhist view of the self: against the modern view of independent originality Lewis sides with the Buddhist understanding of 'dependent origination' (Clasquin, 1997). But there is a fullness, although not the impossible fullness which modernity posited as the property of the individual self. Lewis's account of the self has archetypal overtones reminiscent of Jung but Lewis, like Tarnas (1996), places more store on archetypes than Jung's Kantianism permitted him to do. In contrast to the view of the self in Indian thought and in the affirmative postmodernism of Tarnas (1996), Lewis does not see the human self losing its identity in a pantheistic oneness with all things. We may not qualify for the sacred name of 'I' but we are selves in a process of becoming (or un-becoming). It is only

"when I turn to Christ, when I give myself up to His Personality, that I first begin to have a real personality of my own" (Lewis, 1955:188).

This is as profoundly out of harmony with the Christian deconstructive postmodernism of Taylor (1984) and Cupitt (1998) as it is with the non-Christian constructive postmodernism of Tarnas (1996). But, together with their's, Lewis's view diverges radically from the modern principle of the autonomous subjective self.

5.2.3 On authorship

Just as the issue of individual creative originality must be seen as part of the wider question of the nature of the self, so our consideration of originality leads us on to the more specific question of authorship. On his own authorship, for example of the first Narnia story, Lewis could say that he knew very little of how the story was born, and that once conceived its development did not unfold according to his planning:

"At first I had very little idea of how the story would go. But then, suddenly, Aslan [the Great Lion, and figure of Christ] came bounding into it. I think I had been having a good many dreams of lions about that time. Apart from that I don't know where the Lion came from or why He came. But once He was there He pulled the whole story together, and soon He pulled the six other Narnian stories in after Him". (Lewis, 1982c:79)

Similarly Lewis writes with regard to the mythopoeic character of JRR Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*,

"Every now and then, risen from sources we can only conjecture and almost alien (one would think) to the author's habitual imagination, figures meet us so brimming with life (not human life) that they make our sort of anguish and our sort of exaltation seem unimportant. ... This is surely the utmost reach of invention, when the author produces what seems to be not even his own, much less anyone else's. Is mythopoeia after all not the most, but the least, subjective of activities?" (Lewis, 1982d:116)

Here again Lewis alludes to vast realities, prior to and infinitely greater than the human self, as well as the whole world of its experience, but making their presence felt through human selves. A whole world, not only of the natural processes referred to by Lewis in his deconstructive assessment of the self (Lewis, 1955), but also of other, huger realities, is expressed in the human self. This self, a thin film on a vast sea, diverges profoundly from the self-contained, 'original' concept of the self of the modern literary critics. Lewis's use of imagery here is no doubt in debt to Freud, but more even to Jung. If Lewis laid claim to originality this might constitute a problem but, even apart from this, his drawing from Jungian notions is itself postmodern in tendency (Tarnas, 1996).

The comments offered on Lewis's understanding of authorship, so far, are strongly in line with the constructive postmodernism of Griffin (1990) or that of Tarnas (1996) but they are linked with views on the nature of reading and authorship which show close affinities with the deconstructive position of Taylor (1982; 1984). For example, Lewis (1982a:176) distinguishes between 'intention' and 'meaning', saying that "it is the author who *intends*, the book *means*", and elsewhere he states that "an author doesn't necessarily understand the meaning of his own story better than anyone else" (Lewis, 1988a:462). This is strongly reminiscent of the Derridean notion (followed by Taylor) that a text is not dependent on its author for its meaning: the author's interpretation of it is no more authoritative than that of any other reader, because text, author and reader alike are all expressions of the wider fabric of the world as text. It must be noted that there are strong similarities not only between this

postmodern view of authorship and that of Lewis but also with the position of the New Criticism school of literary criticism which flourished from the late 1930s into the 1950s. Eagleton (1996:41) notes that New Criticism differed from the previous orthodoxy of I.A. Richards who assumed that a poem was "no more than a transparent medium through which we could observe the poet's psychological processes". Against this, New Criticism saw a text as independent of both author and reader. In his own professional academic work Lewis had to deal with the influence of Richards in England, and his rebuttal of the Ricardian position is clearly evident in the excerpts which have been cited. Whether or not these views of Lewis were influenced by the New Criticism school is difficult to ascertain but in any event they are rooted in Lewis's anti-modern valuation of the individual subject, which would have been almost as alien to the New Critics as to Richards.

5.2.4 On the truth of science:

The modern faith in science (that is 'science' according to the Anglo-American use of the word), which is noted by Gamble (1981) as one of the main pillars of modern thought, is rejected by Lewis in a few key statements. Chapter Two of Book Four of *The Pilgrim's Regress* carries beneath its title the summary,

"A question-begging argument exposed - The sciences bring to the 'facts' the philosophy they claim to derive from them." (Lewis, 1977:87)

This is not an original reflection on the nature of science by Lewis, as this view would have been current in intellectual circles at the time of its writing in the early 1930's. It is, nevertheless, an unambiguous statement on the nature of science within a general climate of opinion, including educated and even philosophical opinion, which held science in very different regard. The logical positivist philosophy, which held sway in English academic circles for a large part of the period during which most of Lewis's work was produced, generally gave a priority to 'data' which laid it open to this criticism offered by Lewis. As Popper (1972) established, the data of observation can never be interpreted in and of themselves. Since Popper, other authors, most notably Kuhn (1970) and Feyerabend

(1988), have even more devastatingly undermined the belief that science could manufacture objective knowledge from 'neutral facts' alone. But right into the nineteen-nineties, books aimed at popular Christian audiences have continued to base themselves on the assumptions of the nature and function of science which were characteristic of nineteenth century modernism. Thus book after book attempts to prove the compatibility of the Bible or Christianity with modern science. The fundamentalist 'Creation Science' project is based on this type of uncritical acceptance of a modern view of science which has long been discredited in academic circles. Even when Lewis wrote on science in the nineteen-thirties and nineteen-forties this view had long been discarded by those at the cutting-edge of scientific theory, particularly with the advent of the 'New Physics' in the first two decades of the twentieth century, and subsequent developments (Davies, 1984). Lewis (1987e), in a paper originally read in 1946, points out that the adoption of the statistical understanding of scientific laws destroyed the 'impregnable' foundation of nineteenth century naturalistic science. The fact that it was necessary for Lewis to make this comment indicates the continuing hold of the nineteenth century scientific ideal well into the twentieth century. But Lewis went far beyond this in his questioning of the 'old', modern view of science, certainly beyond Popper, whose work on the theory of science was very current from the nineteen-forties into the nineteen-sixties and even later. Lewis's statements on science during that period parallel the contributions to the understanding of science, as a socially and culturally determined activity, which came later from the work of Kuhn and Feyerabend, within the philosophy of science, and the work of Foucault on the nature of knowledge in general (eg Foucault, 1972). In a highly significant statement, originally written in the nineteen-forties, Lewis (1981b:113) observes that, "probably every age gets, within certain limits, the science it desires". He demonstrates this in the particular example of Darwinian theory when he shows how the myth of 'development', which was expressed in Darwin's theory of evolution, satisfied the desires of the age in which it came to dominate science. Lewis is not concerned with disproving Darwinism but with demonstrating its mythical quality and showing how it only came to be accepted in an age whose temper it suited:

"It is not irrelevant in considering the mythical nature of this cosmology to notice that the two great imaginative expressions of it are *earlier* than the evidence [for the evolutionary paradigm]: Keat's *Hyperion* and the *Niebelung's Ring* are pre-Darwinian works." (Lewis, 1975c:55)

Here is the philosophy which the modern sciences have brought to the facts, and which permitted the immediate followers of Darwin to read the biological and geological data in the way which they did. But Lewis traces the interest-driven nature of science still further back. He explains how magic and science were twins, practised by the same Renaissance intellectuals, although one twin was healthy and thrived while the other was sickly and died. The connecting motive in both, however, was power:

"The chief trumpeter of the new age ... Bacon condemns those who value knowledge as an end in itself ... The true object is to extend Man's power ... He rejects magic because it does not work; but his goal is that of the magician." (Lewis, 1978:46)

Lewis's diagnosis is the same as that of Foucault: the vaunted 'disinterested' knowledge of science, that prime modernist revelation of truth, is not merely tainted by 'interests' but has them at its heart. The 'on the ground' sentiment of disillusionment with modern science in postmodern society, as expressed in the ecological movement, has perceived this as much as the postmodern theorists. Near the conclusion of the *Abolition of Man*, Lewis (1978:47) once again provides a comment which is extraordinarily significant in the light of postmodern developments in science in the last two decades of the twentieth century:

"Is it, then, possible to imagine a new Natural Philosophy, continually conscious that the 'natural object', produced by analysis and abstraction, is not reality but only a view, and always correcting the abstraction? I hardly know what I am asking for. I hear rumours that Goethe's approach to nature deserves fuller consideration - that even Dr Steiner may have seen something that orthodox researchers have missed. The regenerate science which I have in mind would not do even to minerals and vegetables what modern science threatens to do to man himself. When it explained it would not explain away. While it spoke of the parts it would remember the whole. While studying the *It* it would not lose what Martin Buber calls the *Thou*-situation.."

The rumours which Lewis appears to have heard in the nineteen-forties, when this was originally written, were long in delivering their vague promise. Griffin and his fellow-

authors (Griffin ed., 1988), in *The Re-enchantment of Science* describe an approach to science somewhat along the lines of what Lewis appears to have in mind here. But it is Tarnas (1996) who provides an account of a new vision of science which is, once again, startling in the way it parallels Lewis's dream of a 'redeemed science' almost point by point. What Tarnas writes is too extended to quote here, but the rejection of the absolutism of the objectification of modern science is there, as is the reference to Goethe and Steiner, and their 'participatory' epistemology which fulfils the requirements of the respectful science for which Lewis longs. What Lewis hardly knows to ask, Tarnas outlines clearly. Tarnas's bibliography is massive, with all debts fully acknowledged, but he has not read Lewis. Despite the close agreement in their conclusions, though, there is one vital point on which Tarnas differs from Lewis: his postmodernism leads into pantheism. Griffin too rejects 'supernaturalist theism', although in his case it is for a 'naturalist theism' which owes much to Whitehead's process philosophy. But Lewis's prophetic postmodernism with regard to science is proclaimed without a hint of abandoning the God of the great Christian creeds. This will require careful attention in Part III before arriving at the conclusions of this thesis.

5.2.5 On progress:

Lewis's poem, *The Future of Forestry*, published in 1938, reveals his romantic roots: in it Lewis wonders who will tell children what trees were when they have all gone, victims of roads and shops (King, 1998). The same spirit of anti-modernism, which has been referred to earlier, can be detected here in Lewis. The opposition to 'progress', whether in technology or in the related despoilation of nature (which is referred to in the previous excerpt in which he discusses the possibilities of a 'redeemed' science), is not at all peculiar to Lewis. It lay at the core of the Romantic movement, which pre-dates Lewis and in which much of his development was immersed. Although it is closely bound up with the 'postmodern' aspects of his work, it must be regarded more as a precursor than a substantive part of his prophetic role. Nevertheless, the discrediting of the belief in progress is very much part of postmodernism (Vattimo, 1988) and Lewis expresses himself frequently and forthrightly on this question, particularly with regard to the linking of human destiny with ongoing progress

in modern humanism. In the *Abolition of Man*, Lewis (1978:41) concludes that the final outcome of human progress in the 'conquest of Nature', is the 'abolition of Man': "Man's conquest of Nature turns out, at the moment of its consummation, to be Nature's conquest of Man". His argument cannot be done justice in a brief space but it is tied closely to the outcome of the application of modern scientific reductionism: the process in which human beings explain everything away is finally turned back on humanity itself. In his essay 'The empty universe' he writes:

"And thus we arrive at a result uncommonly like zero ... The subject is as empty as the object. Almost nobody has been making linguistic mistakes about almost nothing."
(Lewis, 1986b:83)

The 'conquest of Man by Nature' occurs because the power of the human race over Nature can always only be vested in a small group. When human nature has been finally reduced to nothing more than another aspect of Nature (psychological, biological and ultimately chemical processes), the power thus placed in human hands is the power of a small elite of 'Conditioners' over the rest of the human race. And, in the absence of any other source of value, because all will have been explained away, the only motives which that elite can act upon will be those thrown up by biological nature. It is at this point of Lewis's thought that he is at his furthest in spirit from the type of postmodernism which has its ancestry in Nietzsche. Sprigge (1985) shows that Nietzsche's ultimate motive of the Will-to-Power amounts to a 'biologism'. In his exposition, Nietzsche himself explicitly points to the drive of biological organisms to extend their control over their surroundings. In effect the conclusion of both Nietzsche and Lewis is the same: if there is no objective value then there is no reality except for that of power - that of some over others. Both aim to get those who believe in modern humanism to wake up to this reality, Nietzsche with joy and Lewis with foreboding. Like Nietzsche, Lewis shows that this conclusion was implicit from the very beginning of the modern age, for example in the statements of Bacon quoted earlier. Nietzsche's doctrine of the Eternal Return (Sprigge, 1985) is his reply to modernist faith in progress, but that of Lewis is very different. The same issue which is at stake here is seen from a somewhat different perspective in Lewis's *Evolutionary Hymn* (Lewis, 1964b) which,

despite its satirical tone, accurately embodies, in the main, the position of John Dewey. Dewey, although often thought of as representative of liberal modern thought, is, as previously noted, identified as postmodern by no less a postmodern theorist than Richard Rorty (Snyder, 1988). A few verses must suffice here to demonstrate the point at issue:

Lead us, Evolution, lead us
Up the future's endless stair;
Chop us, change us, prod us, weed us,
For stagnation is despair:
Groping, guessing, yet progressing,
Lead us nobody knows where.

...

Far too long have sages vainly,
glossed great Nature's simple text;
He who runs can read it plainly,
'Goodness = what comes next.'
By evolving, Life is solving
All the questions we perplexed.

On then! Value means survival-
Value. If our progeny
Spreads and spawns and licks each rival,
That will prove its deity
(Far from pleasant, by our present
Standards, though, it well may be).

The biologism of Nietzsche finds a more collectivist counterpart in Dewey's concern for the survival of the human species, and the Eternal Return is replaced in Dewey by the allurements of endless change ('progress' is strictly speaking not an appropriate word for Dewey's vision). Lewis's point, though, remains essentially the same: without some other standard of value to judge by, why should we feel an obligation towards our species' survival? The core of Lewis's case against 'progress' amounts to the assertion (Lewis, 1981c) that without universal values the whole idea of progress is meaningless as there can be no question of progress if there is no standard of value by which progress can be determined.

Vattimo (1988), standing in the Nietzschean tradition, makes exactly the same point as Lewis in arguing that the modernist abandonment of God as a point of reference implicitly undermines any notion of progress. But Lewis does not abandon the God whom modernism had relied on even in its denial of him. Neither does he abandon the traditional ethics which Nietzsche, and the postmodernism which he inspired, rejects along with God as he presses the case of the death of God against the modern position. Lewis is not modern but the question of whether or not this position of his irrevocably neutralises any claim to postmodern status on Lewis's behalf must be an essential factor in arriving at a conclusion in this thesis.

5.2.6 On human reason:

It is not only with regard to theism and traditional ethics that the claim for the postmodern relevance of Lewis may be questioned. The question of reason was addressed in the previous chapter in the context of Eastern Christian thought but it deserves further attention at this point in view of the interaction between this and other categories of Lewis's thought regarding the modern. It is also important because of the additional query which it raises against the 'postmodernism' of Lewis. In his account of Nietzsche's relationship to postmodernism, Robinson (1999:17) points out that the whole structure of 'Enlightenment' modern thought is founded on "an unshakeable belief in reason", generally identified with 'reasoning' or logic. This position is inextricably associated with the axiom of the autonomous subject: reason is the means by which the human subject is able to comprehend and master the world, cognitively and consequently materially. But to Nietzsche, the 'laws of logic', which the 'Enlightenment' took from Aristotle via Medieval Christianity, are merely "a reflection of the way that our minds work" with no relation to a transcendent reality; they have "nothing to do with objective knowledge or truth" (Robinson, 1999). Despite the useful results which logic provides it is merely a survival tool whose validity rests in the ability to control our world. Lewis's position on the nature of reason is diametrically opposed to that of Nietzsche and all of 'deconstructionist' theory which followed him. Despite reservations on the part of Lewis, which have already been

commented on and which will be taken further in later sections of this chapter, it is very much the traditional position of Western philosophy, as exemplified in the work of St Thomas Aquinas (Copleston, 1955) and subsequently taken up, in somewhat mutated form in modern thought. It is a common criticism of the postmodern position on reason that it is self-refuting (Tamas, 1996) because it uses the method of inference to prove that inference is invalid. Lewis had argued against materialist philosophy which similarly discredited reasoning by reducing it to the non-rational processes of neural chemistry. In reply to this position Lewis (1981f:87) points out that,

"A universe whose only claim to be believed in rests on the validity of inference must not start telling us that inference is invalid. That would really be a bit too nonsensical. I conclude then that logic is a real insight into the way in which real things have to exist. In other words the laws of thought are also the laws of things: of things in the remotest space and the remotest time."

(Lewis, 1960) takes the implications of this further in a discussion which is treated at much greater length in his book, *Miracles*, which he understood to be crucial to his whole position. Because, to Lewis, 'Reason' cannot be merely another part of the material world of modern Naturalism, he is compelled to conclude that it is, in a broad sense supernatural, in the same way that the apparently random world of the sub-atomic substratum of the universe, discovered by science, can be considered to be sub-natural. To Lewis, the seamless web of the natural world of monistic materialism is pock-marked, by irruptions from this 'supernatural' realm, wherever Reason is operating in human minds - Lewis will not admit the validity of the term 'human reason'. A little later in the essay quoted above, Lewis (1981f:89) states,

"Where thought is strictly rational it must be, in some odd sense, not ours, but cosmic or super-cosmic. It must be something not shut up inside our heads but already 'out there' - in the universe or behind the universe: either as objective as material Nature or more objective still. Unless all that we take to be knowledge is an illusion, we must hold that in thinking we are not reading rationality into an irrational universe but responding to a rationality with which the universe has always been saturated".

Lewis has been quoted at some length here in order to state his position unmistakably, for

it is completely at odds with everything normally recognised as postmodern in the understanding of thought. The medieval heritage, which Lewis here allies himself with, may have been taken for granted by modern theorists from the Renaissance to the 'Enlightenment' and after, but in doing this it tried to partake of the fruit of reason after laying the axe to the root of confidence in reason. This is part of the absurdity of modern thought which postmodernist theorists like Vattimo (1988) point out. Lewis, too, but from an opposite position to Vattimo's Nietzscheanism, points out the absurdity. Whether, in doing so, he can be regarded as postmodern or whether instead he must be understood as merely medieval, is of great importance to the conclusion of this thesis. But, as Lewis (1981f) points out, the position which he presents on Reason is not exclusive to the medieval Christian heritage (although it is fundamental to it): the recognition of the 'supernatural' character of Reason can be developed in all sorts of ways, "either into an idealistic metaphysic or a theology, into a theistic or a pantheistic or a dualistic theology" (Lewis, 1981:89). Thus the postmodern deconstruction of reason is pitted not only against modern Western thought, and the medieval Western thought which was its unacknowledged parent, it confronts also much of Indian and Chinese philosophy, as well as Islamic and Zoroastrian thought, amongst others. Many books can, and have been written on the postmodern attack on reason (eg Schrag, 1992) but at this point the charge of Sardar (1998) may be repeated: Western thought placed itself on a path (the wrong turning cited earlier from Lewis?) which led nowhere - in the literal sense of nihilism. Having reached its inevitable point of bankruptcy, it attempts to generalise its crisis of meaning to non-Western cultures and pull them down also, into a pluralism in which all positions are equally valid, meaning in fact that the truth claims of all are equally invalid. Although Sardar is bitter in his repudiation of postmodernism there is a sense, at least when this type of rejection is made from within the Western intellectual world, that this position must be considered *post*-modern. Thus Lewis is not merely medieval: he has grappled with the issues in modern thought, has perceived the nothingness inherent in it and seeks something else. His critique of the modern position on reason, which has been discussed in this section, is merely negative commentary on it. The affirmative counterpart to Lewis's negation will be touched

on more closely in the section 'on foundationalism'. It is in the light of that affirmation that Lewis's claims for 'Reason' must be understood, for his rationalism is not that of modernism's autonomous human reason. With regard to that type of rationalism Lewis's position is in sympathy with the postmodern diagnosis. But if Lewis's faith is not the modernist faith then neither is it consonant with postmodernism:

"A man's rational thinking is just so much as his share in eternal Reason as the state of his brain allows to become operative." (Lewis, 1960:43)

The state of the human brain may be rendered unamenable to the expression of 'eternal Reason' through fatigue, alcohol or the passions which arise out of animal desire or social prejudice. We are reminded here of the need for the 'holy passion of love', referred to in a previous chapter, which St Maximus the Confessor sees as essential for the true operation of humanity's rational faculty. As in Lewis, the Maximian view respects the virtue of the faculty of reason without putting it on a pedestal. Unless it is subject to the higher 'spiritual intellect' or *nous*, all its works will amount to the same kind of nothingness which is identified by Lewis and, from a different perspective, by postmodernism. There can be no question of the type of foundationalism in which modern thought attempted to take merely human reason as its ultimate basis. In mentioning 'foundationalism' we come to the keystone of the case for the relevance of Lewis to the development of a postmodern Christian position. But, before passing on to discuss Lewis's position regarding foundationalism in relation to myth, it is necessary to note comments from Lewis on what he saw as the limitations on reason. Schakel (1998:349) quotes from a paper of Lewis:

"I am a rationalist. For me reason is the natural organ of truth; but imagination is the organ of meaning."

Schakel comments that this is part of the paradoxical nature of Lewis, but the qualified status which Lewis accords to reason is stated far more strongly in a personal letter of Lewis to one of his Anthroposophist friends:

"No one is more convinced than I that reason is utterly inadequate to the richness and spirituality of real things; indeed this is itself a deliverance of reason. Nor do I doubt the presence, even in us, of faculties embryonic or atrophied that lie in an indefinite margin around the little finite bit of focus that is intelligence - faculties anticipating or remembering the possession of huge tracts of reality that slip through the meshes of the intellect. And, to be sure, I believe that the symbols presented by imagination at its height are the working of that fringe and present to us as much of the superintelligible reality as we can get while we retain our present form of consciousness." (quoted in Harwood, 1979:26)

Harwood (1979:25) comments that during Lewis's lifetime there were many people who "found in his various works ... ideas, descriptions, allusions, that seemed so close to Anthroposophy" that they assumed that he must have got them from Steiner. But, in fact Lewis was closer to Christian mysticism, including the pre-eminently mystical Eastern Christian 'connection' which was the subject of the previous chapter, as is revealed in a further passage of the letter to Harwood:

"...if more knowledge is to come it must be the wordless and thoughtless knowledge of the mystic; not the celestial statistics of Swedenborg, the Lemurian history of Steiner, or the demonology of the Platonists. All this seems to me merely an attempt to know the superintelligible as if it were a new slice of the intelligible" (Harwood, 1979:26)

In identifying the imagination as, in some limited way at least, a medium for higher things than can be grasped by the rational intellect, Lewis leads us on to the function of myth.

5.2.7 On foundationalism and on myth as ultimate truth

In discussing the work of Nietzsche, Robinson (1999) cites Shakespeare's quotation from Aristotle of the maxim that 'nothing will come out of nothing' and goes on to point out that all philosophies have to start with beliefs which are taken as axioms, 'self-evident truths'. In noting the Nietzschean and subsequent postmodern attack on this type of foundationalism it is necessary to recall the assertion of Bischoff (1976) that all philosophy is 'interpreted myth'. As will be shown, Lewis is entirely in accord with this understanding of the foundation of all our apprehensions of truth. The 'solid truths' on which modern thought sought to rest its confidence - in its epistemological and ethical systems - are as out of court

on this view of the mythic foundations of truth as they are in deconstructionist postmodernism. Lewis is also at one with Bischoff on the relation between myth and reason in the question of truth: myth is primary but it is open to interpretation, and interpretation is a process of reasoning and is necessarily closely dependent on inference. But, in order to appreciate this understanding of the nature of truth, it is essential to free ourselves first from the modern view of myth as being composed of quaint but untrue stories. This point has already been touched on previously along with reference to the mythical nature of the starting points of science, for example in the developmental myth applied in Darwinism, and in Democritus's image of the atomistic nature of the universe. In the interpretation and empirical application of these myths modern science has achieved much but this does not invalidate the mythical nature of its foundation. Lewis (1959) recognises the truth value of the pagan myths which (it might be said) were for him personally, as in the Pauline image of the Jewish Law, a 'schoolmaster', or perhaps rather a (somewhat promiscuous) story-teller nurse-maid, who led him to truth. His conversion to Christianity was preceded by his being compelled to rethink his evaluation of his beloved pagan myths as 'lies breathed through silver' (Lewis, 1959). His consequent high regard for myth is expressed in his opinion of the Incarnation of Christ as myth - but 'Myth become Fact' - the title of one of his papers (Lewis, 1979b). The importance of myth lies in its overcoming of some of the inadequacy of reason. In addition to his comments quoted in the previous section, Lewis (1979b:42) notes that rational thinking cuts us off from reality:

"The more lucidly we think, the more we are cut off; the more deeply we enter into reality, the less we can think. You cannot *study* pleasure at the moment of the nuptial embrace, nor repentance while repenting, nor analyse the nature of humour while roaring with laughter. But when else can you really know these things? 'If only my tooth-ache would stop, I could write another chapter about Pain.' But once it stops, what do I know about pain?

Of this tragic dilemma myth is the partial solution. In the enjoyment of a great myth we come nearest to experiencing as a concrete what can otherwise be understood only as an abstraction."

From this point Lewis goes on to develop a position on truth and reality which is very

different to the conception of 'truth' in modern rationalism, and against which the postmodern deconstructionist attack is levelled. Lewis refers to the experience of myth, in particular the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, and the principle which it embodies, of the fading of reality as one tries to grasp it:

"You are not looking for an abstract 'meaning' at all. If that was what you were doing the myth would be for you no true myth at all but a mere allegory. You were not knowing, but tasting; but what you were tasting turns out to be a universal principle. The moment we *state* this principle we are admittedly back in the world of abstraction. It is only while receiving the myth as a story that you experience the principle concretely.

When we translate we get abstraction - or, rather, dozens of abstractions. What flows into you from the myth is not truth but reality (truth is always *about* something, but reality is that *about which* truth is), and, therefore, every myth becomes the father of innumerable truths on the abstract level. Myth is the mountain whence all the different streams arise which become truths down here in the valley ... Or, if you prefer, myth is the isthmus which connects the peninsular world of thought with that vast continent we really belong to." (Lewis, 1979b:43)

It may be that little or nothing of all this is admissible in terms of the different varieties of postmodern theorising associated with the 'end of modernity', but what these views of Lewis, on truth and reality, represent is profoundly at odds with modern, 'Enlightenment' thought. This is not mere 'pre-modernity' on the part of Lewis: it constitutes a theoretical formulation which arises out of an intellectual engagement with modernity, which undermines the validity of modern thought and offers an affirmative alternative. May it be, perhaps, that Lewis, in his own way, presents here a '*post-modern*' alternative to all the current variants of sceptical and affirmative postmodernism? There is a sense in which myth does provide a type of 'foundation' in Lewis's interpretation, but it is not the rational-intellectual type of foundation which was claimed for the epistemological and ethical formulations flowing from the 'Enlightenment'. There is a case to be answered on another account, though: as Robinson (1999) indicates, the anti-foundationalism which derives from Nietzsche is focused in particular on metaphysical systems. It has emerged in this thesis that Lewis is prepared to ally his understanding of Christianity firmly with the metaphysical endeavour

in general. This appears to clash not only with the forthrightly atheistic position of Cupitt's postmodernism but also with the more restrained, non-metaphysical theological approach of Hart, both of which were discussed in Chapter Four. Nevertheless there is some ambiguity with regard to Lewis's position on metaphysics.

5.2.8 On systems of thought and metaphysical presence

From his reading of Derrida, Cupitt (1997, 1998) concludes that the only role permissible for God, in postmodernity, is as an imaginary construct which we may use (in full knowledge of its non-realism) to obtain a view of the world with the 'Eye of God'. In all other ways the concept of God has been deconstructed in such a way as to render it inoperative in the postmodern mind. But, as Hart (1989) points out, Derrida's deconstruction has nothing to say on the existence or non-existence of God. In fact, in terms of the argument of Hart which has been presented in Chapter Four, Cupitt's atheism is as metaphysical as any positive assertion of a realistically conceived God: a metaphysical approach, whether it claims to prove or disprove the 'presence', of God or of any other essence, goes beyond the immediacy of physical nature as it presents itself to experience. But, as noted in Chapter Four, what *is* of relevance to the application of deconstruction is the *use* to which the concept of God is put. A fuller quotation of a previous excerpt from Lewis may suffice to illustrate this point without having to provide a full exposition of it. Lewis writes here in the context of a discussion of authority, particularly with regard to belief. He rejects "both the Fundamentalist's view of the Bible and the Roman Catholic's view of the Church" before discussing 'spirit' and 'letter' in Jesus's use of the Old Testament scriptures:

"Yet it is perhaps idle to speak here of spirit and letter. There is almost no 'letter' in the words of Jesus. Taken by a literalist, He will always prove to be the most elusive of teachers. Systems cannot keep up with that darting illumination. No net less wide than [a person's] whole heart, nor less fine of mesh than love, will hold the sacred fish" (Lewis, 1967:100).

In this metaphorical account of the elusive 'sacred fish' of the divine presence, that is the

'darting illumination' which cannot be pinned down within any system, Lewis firmly rejects the use of God as the underpinning of a rationally constructed system of thought. This parallels Hart's assessment of Derridean deconstruction, which is that it makes no claims on the reality or unreality of God but comes into operation "if I use 'God' to ground my account of phenomena" (Hart, 1989:26). In this regard the comment of Lewis's friend, Bede Griffiths (Griffiths, 1979:21) is significant: "I don't think that he found St Thomas himself very attractive ... and neo-Thomism he objected to most strongly". This would be entirely consistent with the excerpt from Lewis above, for the systems which are incapable of pinning down the 'sacred fish' include all metaphysical systems of Christian philosophy, including that of the *Summa Theologica*. The Derridean attack on metaphysics is, of course, not only directed against the construction of rational edifices of thought. What is particularly objectionable to Derrida is the notion that there are essences or real 'presences' behind the words of human discourse. The theistic idea of the presence of God in all things involves much more than this but, at the very least, the belief that there is a substantial concept behind the word 'God' is enough to draw the deconstructionist attack on to theistic discourse. Therefore, when a Lewis scholar like Leanne Payne describes her book on 'the Christian worldview of CS Lewis' by the title *Real Presence* (Payne, 1979), it seems that this must place Lewis directly at odds with postmodernism, at least as represented by Derrida. As indicated in Chapter Four, Hart (1989) notes that, despite his positive interest in apophatic theology, Derrida was not at ease with the hyperessential 'Being beyond being' of Christian mysticism. From what Hart writes it appears that this role of 'presence' in Lewis's thought is not exactly that which is targeted by Derridean theory. The previous discussion of Hart's interpretation of Derrida's deconstruction, in Chapter Four has reference here: Hart points out that a non-metaphysical theology is not subject to deconstruction. The meaning of 'non-metaphysical theology' is crucial here. On the one hand it differs from Cupitt's theistic non-realism (which has been shown to amount to atheism); on the other it would also seem to differ from Lewis's position by virtue of his own recognition of its metaphysical nature, which was noted earlier. The difficulty here is to discover the middle point, between these two positions, where that of Hart lies. It does seem, though, that Lewis and Hart might

be closer by virtue of their common exclusion of atheism. But the anti-metaphysical deconstructionist disallowal of positive statements of atheism in Hart (1989) appears to be on a par with the disallowal of positive statements of theism. There may be some accord here with the statement of faith of West (1996:157):

"Plurality, ambiguity, partiality and particularity are the terrain in which we must now choose to work, not giving in to the temptations of the play or nihilism, but deeply committed to the God of life, who is always found on the boundaries."

The references to 'plurality, ambiguity, partiality and particularity', despite the rejection of nihilism, reflect the general tone of deconstructive postmodernism. It is not possible, at least from this particular article of West's, to be sure of the nature of the God of the boundaries whom he recommends. Neill (1966), referring to Bultmannite theology, expresses some scepticism about statements on such notions as 'Resurrection as a symbol of hope' which are made along with a denial of the reality of the Resurrection of Christ. His scepticism is strongly tempered by his appreciation for the vital pastoral commitment of Bultmann but it remains nevertheless. Lewis (1975b) appears to display still more scepticism with regard to Bultmann and it seems probable that he might have been as suspicious of the 'God of the boundaries' (even though this might be an unjust evaluation of the position of West) as he would have been of proclamations of 'symbols of hope' which denied the reality behind the symbols. Lewis's metaphysical commitment is shown by his association with the idea of a 'reality behind the symbols' - which, much more than is the case with liberal theology, is excluded by deconstructive postmodernism. There is thus cause to doubt Lewis's relation to a non-metaphysical, deconstructionist position. And yet the opposition of Lewis to 'systems' which might tie God down, or make him available as 'God-in-a-box' (Phillips, 1956), raises the question of how far Lewis was in fact from non-metaphysical theology. To what extent, we may ask, does Lewis's metaphor of the divine 'darting illumination' accord with West's 'God of the boundaries'? The apparent ambivalence of Lewis regarding metaphysics is evident in a further category identified in his thought, that relating to the question of the 'centre'.

5.2.9 On 'holding the centre'

The article of Degenaar (1996), 'The collapse of unity', commences with the oft-quoted line from Yeats, 'Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold'. This loss of the centre and associated collapse of unity is intimately a part of the work of the range of postmodern theorists whom Robinson (1999) discusses in relation to Nietzsche - in Lyotard's disallowal of 'Grand Narratives', for example, as much as in the work of Derrida. It is as much implied in the Nietzschean demolition of metaphysics as is the denial of 'presence'. The very particular approach to the 'centre' in Lewis's understanding of Christianity must, therefore, be of interest in the present discussion. Lewis prefaces his major popular work with a discussion of the situation he faced in seeking to articulate what is common in, what he agrees, is the badly fractured state of the Christian churches:

"I have met with little of the fabled *odium theologicum* from members of communions different from my own. Hostility has come from borderline people ... This I find curiously consoling. It is at her centre, where her truest children dwell, that each communion is really closer to every other in spirit, if not in doctrine. And this suggests that at the centre of each there is a something, or a Someone, who against all divergencies of belief, all differences of temperament, all memories of mutual persecution, speaks with one voice."

(Lewis, 1955:8-9.)

This statement on Lewis's conception of 'mere Christianity' is the key to his presentation of Christianity in the book of this name from which it is extracted. It embodies a paradoxical notion of what might be called the 'decentred centre'. In his brief account of *The Latin Letters of CS Lewis*, Moynihan (1987) includes a chapter on Christian unity which refers to Lewis's reading of the works of Thomas More and Tyndale.

"Both were the saintliest men whose shoes Lewis felt unworthy to unloose. But they differed; and their dissension arose not from faults of theirs or ignorance but rather from their very virtues and their faith's truest depth. It was what was best in each that placed them most at variance. Lewis concludes that for him this is a mystery."

(Moynihan, 1987:20-21)

We must add the obvious reality that apart, from their virtues and the 'truest depths' of their faith, More and Tyndale differed in their doctrine and systems of theology, which provided the framework within which their faith and virtues operated. It is through these opposed systems, Lewis perceives, that the 'darting illumination' of the same 'Someone' is given - a 'Someone' Who will not be pinned down as the 'God-in-a-box' of Phillips, not in the system of More and Tyndale, nor of anyone else. Thus we have the paradox of a Lewis who, on the one side is a firm exponent of tradition, accepting the Great Ecumenical Creeds of the Early Church as an authority not to be questioned. To his Hinduphile friend Bede Griffiths he could complain:

"The difficulty of preaching Christ in India is that there is no difficulty. One is up against true Paganism - the best sort of it as well as the worst - hospitable to all gods, naturally 'religious', ready to take any shape but able to retain none." (Lewis, 1988b:478)

On the other hand, Griffiths could say that Lewis had no illusions about the relation of philosophy to faith, and even adds the opinion, "That theology, like philosophy, was also passing I think he would have agreed, at least in some sense" (Griffiths, 1979:22). Griffiths continues: "The object of Christian faith is the Word of God himself, as Lewis himself said, and that Word is a 'mystery' that can never be fathomed". He quotes from a personal letter from Lewis:

"We have no abiding city even in philosophy: all passes except the Word"

The attitude which Lewis reveals towards the opposed systems of theology and doctrine, which are implicated in his discussion of the 'Centre' (Lewis, 1955), bears out what Griffiths says about Lewis's recognition of the flux of theology along with all the systematic constructions of human thought. It also affirms something at least of what West (1996) drives at regarding the 'plurality, ambiguity, partiality and particularity' of human experience, including the experience and knowledge of God. We see here the possibilities for the recognition of the 'postmodernity' of Lewis, but, still, we do not escape the paradox - he remains the staunch exponent of tradition. Thus he writes:

"I am myself a Christian, and even a dogmatic Christian untinged with modernist reservations and committed to supernaturalism in its full rigour." (Lewis, 1981d:65)

And he could ask:

"By the way, did you ever meet, or hear of, anyone who was converted to a 'liberal' or 'demythologised' Christianity? I think that when unbelievers come in at all, they come in a good deal further." (Lewis, 1966:119)

It is not wild, anachronistic speculation to suggest that Lewis would have found much postmodern religion uncongenial; with Mark C Taylor's Derridean-inspired 'a/theology', and Don Cupitt's postmodern religion of a non-realistic 'Eye of God', possibly less congenial than the Neo-paganism of Harvey (1997). For he would have identified Taylor and Cupitt with those who sit on the fringes, "borderline people ... not exactly obedient to any communion" (Lewis, 1955:8). Against their position Lewis sets the 'extreme' elements in every Church [who] are nearest one another (Lewis, 1987d:45). In his experience it was these 'extremists' at the centres of different communions of faith, opposed in many of their essentials, who heard the same Voice. Lewis did not approve of the fractured state of the Christian Church but he did believe that human experience would, in this life, never escape its condition of being partial, particular and paradoxical. In that sense he is at one with the 'decentering' project which can be recognised in postmodern theory such as that of Derrida and Lyotard. He sees no need to try to preserve a comprehensive unified picture of reality, in fact this is part of the impossible dream of the modern age, of 'men who would be as God'. Even with regard to Nature, "It is to be expected that His creation should be, in the main, unintelligible to us" (Lewis, 1979c:33). Lewis continues, by saying of Christians (perhaps, Christians infected with the spirit of modernity?):

"They have a bad habit of talking as if revelation existed to gratify curiosity by illuminating all creation so that it becomes self-explanatory and all questions are answered. But revelation to me appears to be purely practical ...".

But, apart from the natural creation of God, Lewis reveals his scepticism towards the totalitising, 'centred' historical aspirations of modernity, rejected along with all Grand

Narratives by postmodernism (Robinson, 1999):

"Why should Genghis Khan be more important than the patience or despair amongst some one of his victims." (Lewis, 1975c:44)

In the same article, Lewis affirms that there is a God-designed text of the totality of history - but we don't have it. Despite the divergence from deconstructive postmodernism on the issue of Lewis's metaphysical commitment, on the condition of human knowledge Lewis might not be regarded as too far removed from *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* of Lyotard (1984). As we have seen, despite his metaphysics, Lewis does not grant human beings the 'metaphysically-privileged position' for which Vattimo attacks modern thought, and this has important implications in the affinity which we have sought to discern between the thought of Lewis and postmodernism in this subsection. However, this affinity stands alongside the whole list of affinities identified in this as well as in the previous chapter.

5.3 Conclusion

We have seen how on issues such as the understanding of the autonomy and originality of the human subject, the nature of truth and science, progress, foundationalism and 'presence', Lewis takes issue with the vital elements of modern thought. On key points, Lewis tries modern thought and finds it wanting. And if his response is not a mere reactionary anti-modernism, could it not be postmodern? But it is not only in connection with issues such as these, which are the concern of 'deconstructive' postmodern theorists, that Lewis has something to say in terms of the postmodernism of later decades. Therefore it is to the 'affirmative' aspects of his thought to which we must now proceed, and here the question of the simultaneous parallels and divergences, between the thought of Lewis and postmodernism, becomes still more complex.

PART III

CS LEWIS AND POSTMODERNISM II

CHAPTER 6
AFFIRMATIVE POSTMODERNISM

CHAPTER 7
CS LEWIS AND AFFIRMATIVE POSTMODERNISM

CHAPTER 8
ALTERNATIVE MODES OF BEING POSTMODERN?:
CS LEWIS AND RUDOLF STEINER

CHAPTER SIX

AFFIRMATIVE POSTMODERNISM

6.1 Alternative modes of being postmodern?

The adjectives 'affirmative' and 'constructive' have been used in previous chapters in relation to an alternative mode of postmodernism differing from the type of theorising most often associated with the term 'postmodern'. However, before addressing 'affirmative postmodernism' as a topic in its own right in this chapter, the quite acute problems regarding this usage, which were passed over without much comment in Chapter Two, need to be addressed. For many, as for Robinson (1999) in his *Nietzsche and Postmodernism*, postmodernism refers to theorising, such as that of Jacques Derrida, which stands in the tradition of what Snyder (1988) refers to as 'European nihilism'. Before proceeding with the topic of this chapter it must be acknowledged that there is a case to be made for the assertion that this style of theorising leaves no room for postmodern alternatives of an affirmative kind. Griffin (1988), in advocating a 'constructive' or 'affirmative' postmodernism as an alternative to sceptical or nihilistic postmodern thought, chooses to refer to this latter variety of postmodernism as 'deconstructive' but the nature of the terminology he employs here is problematic, not least the very term 'postmodernism' itself. Robinson (1999) points out that leading theorists who have been categorised as postmodern have repudiated the label. This rejection of the term goes beyond the mere denial of its applicability to a particular theorist, as in the case of Foucault (McNay, 1994): Derrida's work on language and meaning calls into question what amounts to an attempt to identify a substantive entity underlying the term 'postmodernism'. In the light of the discussion in Chapter Two, it has nevertheless been used in this thesis but, specifically with regard to the subject-matter of this chapter, Derrida's extreme reserve about his own term, 'deconstruction' (Collins, 1996), raises even more acute questions about Griffin's use of 'deconstructive postmodernism' as a category. Furthermore, it might be argued that what Rosenau (1992) refers to as the 'sceptical' style of postmodern theorising (in Derrida's work, for example)

addresses the problem of meaning in ways which would preclude any subsequent attempt to set up a 'constructive' or affirmative alternative to the negative result of the work of deconstruction. This applies particularly to the metaphysically oriented type of system presented by Griffin and by 'constructive postmodernists' in general. A full discussion of this issue is beyond the scope of the present thesis but some comment is necessary before proceeding. Apart from the question of the propriety of the use which is made here of the term 'deconstructive', it was attempted in Chapter Five of this thesis to show that, in the aspects of his thought which were analysed there, the work of CS Lewis displays a significant degree of prescience with regard to the 'deconstructive' postmodernism which was to become established in the academic world in the decades following his death. It would therefore be inconsistent simply to brush aside the challenge which 'deconstructive' postmodernism poses to the very possibility of an affirmative or 'constructive' postmodernism, while proceeding with an analysis of possible affinities between this type of postmodernism and Lewis's thought. Thus, without presuming to resolve debate on the nature of the postmodern, some points need to be made in defence of the approach which is adopted in this chapter.

It was noted in Chapter Two that Nietzsche, whose thought lies at the root of the work of Derrida and other 'sceptical' postmodernists (Snyder, 1988), himself offered an affirmative alternative to the nihilism of his 'philosophy with a hammer'. This might be taken as simply another instance of the unsystematic and, indeed, inconsistent nature of his work, on which commentators remark (Novak, 1996; Robinson, 1999). But, in developing the argument of this thesis, it would be extraordinary to discount the affirmative element in the thought of Nietzsche because of a failure to conform to canons of logical consistency and systematic method. That might be appropriate to an evaluation of Nietzsche in terms of a philosophy such as Thomism but not in the context of the discussion of a postmodernism devoted to the deconstruction of logic and system. The affirmative note in Nietzsche's thought will, therefore, be given some weight, both in itself and also insofar as it provides a starting point for the development of other affirmative positions, such as that presented by Richard Tamas.

In Tarnas (1996) there is a conspicuous reliance on Nietzsche as the crucial, prophetic figure in the transition of the 'Western Mind' from the modern to the postmodern. Like Nietzsche, Tarnas provides a positive counterpart to the nihilism to which modern Western philosophical thought led. But there is a clear divergence from Nietzsche in Tarnas's account of the emergence of an affirmative postmodernism. Tarnas (1996) gives considerable prominence to the place of the Romantic movement in the development of Western thought. In this he differs markedly from other similar accounts such as Bertrand Russell's *Wisdom of the West* (Russell, 1959). This is unsurprising in view of the fact that in his writing Russell stood in the final development of the rationalist tradition while Tarnas writes from the perspective of the postmodern discrediting of the 'Enlightenment' heritage. In addition, though, while Russell writes out of the confident materialism of the 'empty universe', Tarnas is powerfully influenced by the spiritual tradition of Romanticism:

"God was rediscovered in Romanticism - not the God of orthodoxy or deism but of mysticism, pantheism and immanent cosmic process; not a juridical, monotheistic patriarch but a divinity more ineffably mysterious, pluralistic, all-embracing, neutral or even feminine in gender; not an absentee creator but a numinous creative force within nature and within the human spirit."
(Tarnas, 1996:373)

In his reassertion and re-appropriation of the Romantic tradition for a postmodern era, Tarnas opposes the 'Enlightenment' heritage, embodied in philosophers such as Russell, with its alter ego. Heath & Boreham (1999:11) point out that,

"Romanticism is often taken as the polar opposite of Enlightenment thinking. It is more accurate to see it as a critique of the excessive rationalism on which the Enlightenment came to rely."

In Chapter Two we have already noted the observation of Snyder (1988) that the postmodern exists as an ongoing negative commentary on the modern, from its very inception. The role of the Romantic movement in this regard was also noted: in rejecting the over-emphasis on the rational intellect but, more positively, in promoting qualities such as feeling and will, which are generally linked with the idea of spirit, however broadly interpreted. If Nietzsche was a child of Romanticism in upholding feeling, will and spirit, the 'rediscovery of God',

cited by Tarnas, extends the understanding of 'spirit' in a direction different to that in Nietzsche's thought. While this is not the God of Plato, Aristotle and Christianity, to whom Nietzsche was so vehemently opposed, there is a divergence between Tarnas's spiritual concern and the passion of Nietzsche. Despite his Romantic roots, emphasised by Tarnas, Nietzsche's development of the Romantic 'spirit' was inclined to 'biologism' (Sprigge, 1988) rather than to the often decidedly spiritual expressions of Romanticism, as manifested in pantheistic nature-mysticism. This type of spirituality led, for example, by way of Theosophy, to the richly populated spiritual world of Rudolf Steiner's 'Anthroposophy' (Webb, 1971; Lewis, 1959). And, although Steiner must be seen primarily as situated within the nineteenth century 'spiritualist' reaction against modern rationalism which Webb documents, his work continued into the twentieth century. Thus, in *Romanticism Comes of Age*, Barfield (1966), a leading Anthroposophist, makes the explicit claim that Steiner's work represents the fullness of the development of Romanticism and, as such, constitutes the answer to the needs of modern thought. Steyn (1994) includes Anthroposophy within the parameters of her discussion of 'constructive' postmodernism and, although it will be shown that in some ways it cannot be regarded as typically representative, its spiritual emphasis is common to much of affirmative postmodernism, including that of Tarnas (1996), who places much weight on Steiner's thought. However, Tarnas's interest in Steiner is epistemological even more than it is spiritual.

As pointed out in Chapter Two, Tarnas identifies Goethe and Steiner as key figures in the development of a positive alternative to 'sceptical postmodernism'. What is of particular relevance to this thesis is Lewis's positive references to Goethe and Steiner in criticising the epistemological approach of modernist science (Lewis, 1978). The importance of this association between Lewis and Tarnas will be dealt with in detail in the following chapters but at this point it must be noted that, like Lewis, Tarnas's purpose in citing Goethe, as well as Steiner, is not in the first place to focus on the spiritual (even though this is the ultimate destination of his thought). Rather, it is to incorporate their contributions in developing an alternative epistemological approach to that of the 'Enlightenment' modernism which has

been called into question by postmodern theorising. Bortoft's (1996) book, *The Wholeness of Nature: Goethe's Way of Science*, is testimony, independent of Tarnas, to an approach to knowledge and science very different from that which dominated the mainstream of modern thought until dissenting voices, were increasingly raised in the last decades of the twentieth century. Bortoft's writing remains in the realm of epistemology and science, unlike Tarnas for whom the epistemological question does lead on to the spiritual question. As has been pointed out, this development is not one which is alien to the Romantic tradition. It is also one which is paralleled in other postmodern scientific and philosophical developments. For example, Bohm & Peat (1987) wrote *Science, Order and Creativity* partly as a challenge, by scientists well established in the field of physics, to the dominant tradition in modern science. And, while it presents ways of understanding reality which are foreign to modern thought, it includes nothing in the way of overt spirituality. But Peat's (1996) *Blackfoot Physics* steps boldly into the realm of the spiritual in the 'Journey into the Native American Universe' of its subtitle. What is evident here, and will be further supported as we go on in this chapter, is the reality of a transition in worldviews, from that which dominated modernity, to one which Steyn (1994) characterises in terms of features such as holism, interconnectedness, and spirituality, as well as the assertion of the feminine. The work of Tarnas (1996) is of particular importance in relation to affirmative postmodernism because he offers an alternative epistemological approach, opposed to the modern attempt to ground knowledge of reality in the rationality of the autonomous human subject. But Tarnas is only one representative of an affirmative mode of being postmodern which, apart from this epistemological departure from 'Enlightenment' modernism, is marked, in many of its manifestations, including the thought of Tarnas, by an equally far-reaching departure from modern rationalism: the resurgence of the spiritual referred to in Chapter Two. This spirituality, as noted by Steyn (1994), is not the only feature of affirmative postmodernism. Nor is it a necessary feature of being postmodern in an affirmative mode, as the range of positions reflected in the *SUNY Series on Constructive Postmodernism* testifies (refer to Griffin, 1988). But it seems to be a very common element of affirmative postmodernism, representing the continuation of the revolt in *The Flight from Reason* documented by Webb

(1971) in the previous century.

The approach of Tarnas (1996) may not be as extravagant in its spiritual aspect as some other affirmative postmodernisms, but it is unambiguous nevertheless. Tarnas's is also distinguished from some other such postmodernisms in that their reassertion of the spiritual generally tends to lack the carefully formulated intellectual justification which Tarnas provides in his *Passion of the Western Mind*. To a large extent, postmodern spiritual movements such as Neo-paganism (Harvey, 1997) and the New Age Movement (Steyn, 1994) are exactly that: movements which are primarily a manifestation of religious and social life and which are only secondarily manifested in intellectual formulations. In such movements, a situation has arisen, 'on the ground', of phenomena which are clearly at odds with modernity in their divergence from major aspects of the life and worldview of modernity, and which are not limited to speculative thought. The intellectual underpinning which Tarnas (1996) provides for an affirmative postmodernism will be referred to in more detail in the course of this chapter but, whether or not this might be judged as being adequate to the sceptical postmodern challenge, the 'facts on the ground' referred to by authors such as Steyn and Harvey stand as testimony to the need to recognise and deal with an alternative mode of being postmodern. Some might argue the finer points of whether these phenomena can legitimately claim the label of 'postmodern' but, in terms of a point made earlier in this discussion, this type of linguistic casuistry is incongruent with a postmodernism whose view of language is taken from Derrida and Nietzsche. In any event, even in movements, like Neo-paganism, which appear as revivals of the premodern, such movements represent at some level (though not always that of the academic intellect) an engagement with modernity and a negative commentary on it. As Steyn (1994) shows, in their sense of holism and spirituality, movements like the 'New Age' and Neo-paganism incorporate a powerful rejection of the mechanical model of reality, so central to the development of the modern worldview. The same can be said of other aspects, such as the opposition of the principle of interconnectedness (cited by eg Steyn, 1994; Peat, 1996; Harvey, 1997) not only to modern atomism in general but also to its manifestation in the

modern principle of the autonomous, individual, rational subject. The postmodern attack on modernity occurs from affirmative as well as 'deconstructive' perspectives, and often it is the same features of modernity which are negated: whether, in the case of rationalism for example, by the deconstruction of logic and rationality, or by the affirmation of spirit, intuition or imagination.

It must be said, once again, that by asserting the existence of phenomena, here labelled 'affirmative postmodernism', it is not presumed to settle any theoretical debates on the nature of postmodernism. Rather, this chapter will reflect on positive affirmations made as part of the ongoing critique of modernity referred to by Snyder (1988). Precedents for such an affirmative postmodernism are found in Nietzsche and Romanticism and, it will be argued, in the work of CS Lewis. Without discounting the problems in the use of a terminology of 'constructive' versus 'deconstructive' postmodernism which have been referred to earlier, the procedure adopted in this chapter will be to work from the usage of published authors who present 'affirmative' or 'constructive' postmodern positions as alternatives both to modernity and to 'deconstructive' postmodern theorising. A further, but lesser issue, concerns the use of 'affirmative' and 'constructive', which have been treated effectively as synonyms in the discussion up to this point. It is not possible to find a single pattern for their use in the authors who are cited in this chapter; for example, Richard Tarnas and Don Cupitt use neither, while David Ray Griffin and Chrissie Steyn use only 'constructive' as an antonym to 'deconstructive'. In what follows, the adjective 'affirmative', employed by Roesenau (1992) will be used in the most general way, to refer to any positive position embraced in the name of a postmodern condition while, where it is used at all, 'constructive' will only be used in referring to the more spiritually oriented varieties of postmodernism, and particularly with reference to the writing of Griffin and Steyn. The term 'affirmative postmodernism' will, however, be generally used, whether or not it is applied to positions in which a spiritual realism is affirmed. The broader significance of this term will be evident in the discussion of the affirmative postmodernism of Cupitt which follows.

6.2 Options and trends in affirmative postmodernism

Given the variegated nature of the subject matter, any review of different affirmative possibilities has the potential to lose its way in a mass of information on various postmodernisms. Therefore the review in this chapter will be limited in scope and depth to what is necessary to form a judgement on the status of Lewis's thought *vis-a-vis* this mode of the postmodern. Where particular authors (such as Cupitt or Tarnas) are discussed in detail, this will be done either because they are representative of other writers on affirmative postmodernism, or because they deal with issues which are of importance to the whole possibility and nature of an affirmative postmodernism. The inclusion of Cupitt in this review generates some discord in relation to the spirituality which characterises the approach to affirmative postmodernism in this chapter, but it reflects the special position which he occupies in terms of affirmative postmodernism.

6.2.1 Don Cupitt: looking on the bright side of nihilism

The juxtaposition, in Nietzsche, of the nihilism of his 'deconstruction' of the truth of Western thought together with the positivity of his joyous affirmation of life (Hollingdale, 1990), is followed very closely by Cupitt (1997; 1998). Perhaps even more clearly than in Nietzsche whose work, in the evaluation of both Tarnas (1996) and Novak (1996), was so marked by its morose and tragic aspect as to outweigh his note of joy, Cupitt's writing incorporates nihilism and affirmation together as complementary sides of the same experience of the postmodern. His descriptions of 'solar religion' (Cupitt, 1997) and postmodern mysticism (Cupitt, 1998), cited in Chapter Two, amount to advocacy of a happy relinquishment to what some might regard as conditions of meaninglessness. It might be said, following Sardar (1998), that Cupitt's affirmative postmodernism is only for those who, by virtue of their position on the prosperous side of the global consumer economy, can afford to 'look on the bright side' of nihilism. But, whether or not this does justice to Cupitt's position, it is clear that he excludes not only any realistic understanding of God but also any spiritual realism whatsoever. Cupitt (1997:16) is firmly Derridean in his interpretation of the spiritual world. The world of the spirit which is all around and within in us is nothing

more than the world of language, which forms our entire reality:

"... the magical supernatural world of religion was, all along, a mythical representation of the world of language.

Thus, demythologised spirits turn out to be general words and the huge power of the spirit world over the world of sense experience turns out to be the huge power of language to form, order and classify reality.

"Words are the demons that can so easily slip straight in from the external world into your inmost thoughts and trouble you so deeply, and words are the winged messengers that you send out to accompany your various purposes. Words are invisible public objects hovering about me now as I write, in their multitudes, like swarming spirits. Language is the supernatural power that has called us out of nature."

To Cupitt, then, there is in effect only one mode of being postmodern, and that is according to the 'sceptical' or 'deconstructivist' style of theorising. For Cupitt, the 'return of the spiritual', referred to in Chapter Two, is nothing more than a regression to an outmoded way of understanding the world. Cupitt (1997) interprets the development of Western thought on the 'supernatural' by tracing its course through a series of fundamental transformations, from the archaic world of spirits, through Plato's World of Ideas, and then Kant's order of concepts within the human mind, to the focus of Wittgenstein and linguistic philosophy on the vocabulary of language and language games, and finally to the postmodern understanding of all 'truth' as discourse. Up to this point Cupitt's account is substantially the same as the description of the evolution of the 'Western mind' in Tarnas (1996), but Tarnas is prepared to give more credence to the capacity of extra-linguistic reality to impress itself on human understanding. The affirmation in Cupitt's postmodernism is simply that of the happiness to be found in surrender or acceptance, rather like the understanding of *Nirvana* in the type of interpretation of Buddhism which Bouyer (1989) and Nisker (1998) condemn as superficial. To Cupitt, mysticism, properly understood, can only be the 'mysticism of secondariness', very much the same as the blurring of consciousness which occurs through deep relaxation in a warm bath (Cupitt, 1998). But Tarnas's epistemology leads on to

religious or mystical experience which is focused on a truth which is understood as primary. Thus, following the conclusion of the introductory section of this chapter, it is appropriate to apply the adjective 'affirmative' to Cupitt's treatment of postmodernism, but not 'constructive', which is used by David Ray Griffin and others to describe the re-spiritualisation of a worldview in which the mechanical, 'empty' universe of modernity is repudiated.

6.2.2 Richard Tarnas: participatory epistemology and the 'world's truth'

In outlining a 'participatory epistemology', Tarnas asserts that it holds the key to a way of knowing and understanding the world which is not subject to the flaws of modern thought. At the cognitive level this may be regarded as paralleling the attempt of Schrag (1992), in his *Resources of Rationality*, to develop a 'transverse logic' to meet 'The Postmodern Challenge' to rational thought to which his subtitle refers. It must, once again be emphasised that it is not within the scope of this thesis to weigh and judge the work of philosophers such as Tarnas and Schrag. Instead the purpose here is to indicate that responses to the intellectual challenge of 'sceptical' postmodernism have indeed been forthcoming. What is especially important for the purposes of this thesis is that Tarnas, unlike Schrag, does not limit the implications of his work to an intellectual or cognitive level. Indeed, it must be said that this type of restricted focus, evident in Schrag's response, is the mark of the 'Enlightenment' thought which Tarnas's postmodernism seeks to avoid. The manner in which Tarnas complements the purely intellectual, by endorsing the engagement of other faculties in the act of knowing, will be dealt with more fully later in the course of the present discussion, as will the way in which his case for a participatory epistemology leads on to a concern with the spiritual which further subverts the 'Enlightenment' heritage. It must be noted, though, that the reference to 'other faculties' in connection with this concern with the spiritual should not be interpreted as indicating that Tarnas indulges in any kind of crude spiritualism.

In developing an affirmative postmodern response, both Cupitt and Tarnas take as their point of departure the philosophical *impasse* which Vattimo (1988) characterises as the 'end of modernity'. Cupitt is at one with Vattimo's nihilistic postmodernism but Tarnas (1996) sees the fate of the 'Enlightenment project' in conjunction with the place of the Romantic movement within modernity as a whole. Instead of viewing modernity simply as a dead-end, Tarnas sees modernity as setting the scene for the positive developments of postmodernity, as much through the collapse of the rationalistic 'Enlightenment' heritage as by the Romantic contribution. Despite the waning of Romanticism along with the burgeoning of nineteenth century 'Enlightenment' modernism, Tarnas sees the Romantic heritage as having remained available to provide the basis for a postmodern alternative to the 'Enlightenment' worldview. While Cupitt affirms happy acceptance of the 'secondariness' of everything, as the appropriate response to the postmodern loss of any grounding in a primary reality lying behind our language, Tarnas follows a different line of response. The consequences of these responses are also very different. To Cupitt, in much the same way that the postmodern in general represents the 'end of modernity', postmodern religion represents the 'end of the spiritual', and amounts to abandoning oneself to the ceaseless flux of the language which forms human experience. In contrast, Romantic emphases such as spirituality and holism figure largely in Tarnas's postmodernism and are intimately connected with epistemology. In this subsection the focus is largely on the epistemological aspect which will lead on to the discussion of the spiritual aspect in the next subsection of this chapter.

It is in apprehending extra-linguistic reality, in ways different from the modern, rationalist, objectivist epistemology rejected by sceptical postmodernism, that the possibility of an affirmative postmodernism is opened up for Tarnas. Tarnas draws on developments which occurred within the Romantic movement, in opposition to 'Enlightenment' modernity, when he repudiates the subject-object dualism of 'Enlightenment' epistemology, which unquestioningly assumed the autonomous status of the human observer, standing over-against the world in obtaining 'objective knowledge' of the world. The philosopher of

history, Becker (1969:187), stands in the Romantic tradition when he states that "the universe speaks to us only in response to our purposes". In this he encapsulates something of the nature of a non-dualist epistemology and its potential to provide a viable alternative in a situation in which the modern thought derived from the 'Enlightenment' has reached a philosophical *impasse*. Tarnas, however, appears to go further than Becker by drawing from the Romantic reaction against 'Enlightenment' rationalism to overcome the subject-object dichotomy in its approach to understanding the world. In place of this epistemological dualism, Tarnas (1996) outlines a participatory epistemology which is crucial to his postmodern position. The participatory epistemology described by Tarnas involves a synergistic relationship between human knowers and the immanent truth within the world:

"The interpretative and constructive nature of human cognition is fully acknowledged ... (but) ... nature brings forth its *own* order through the human mind when that mind is employing its full complement of faculties - intellectual, volitional, emotional, sensory, imaginative, aesthetic, epiphanic."
(Tarnas, 1996:435).

When Becker allows that the universe speaks to us 'in response to our purposes', he may be indicating nothing more than that the intentionality of the observer is crucial in determining what is observed. This is a fundamental principle of the Romantic, historicist school of the philosophy of history but, as Tarnas himself describes, the Romantic emphasis on intentionality was taken well beyond the most immediate interpretation of this principle: intentionality and will may be understood as inherent in the nature of the world as a whole, not merely in human beings. It is, in fact, precisely this element within Romanticism which Tarnas (1996) emphasises in formulating his positive alternative to fill the gap left by the postmodern collapse of 'Enlightenment' thought. In his own way, Tarnas arrives at an epistemology which is as spiritual as the Thomist reliance on participation in divine reason as the foundation of human rationality and knowledge - a supernaturalist-theist understanding of the validity of reason which, it will be shown, is shared in large degree by CS Lewis. But, in contrast to the theism of Aquinas, Tarnas's spirituality is totally immanentist. In his discussion of the Romantic rediscovery of God, Tarnas reveals

something of the pantheistic nature of his vision of the positive content which lies beyond the nihilism of the final crisis of Western thought. This question of Tarnas's understanding of the nature of the divine, will be dealt with in more detail as we proceed with this discussion, but it should be noted that Lewis's resolute opposition to pantheism, and to monism in general (Lewis, 1960), sets him at odds with Tarnas and, as will be shown, with postmodern spirituality in general. Like Tarnas, though, he appears to recognise the merit of the 'participatory epistemology' developed in different ways by, for example, Goethe and Steiner (Lewis, 1978). Lewis's position in this regard will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter but, with regard to the position of Tarnas, it must be noted that his monistic understanding of the world is vital to his epistemology.

In his reference to the 'interpretative and constructive nature of human cognition', Tarnas acknowledges the validity of the 'hermeneutics of suspicion' directed against the pretensions of 'Enlightenment' rationalism by both critical modern as well as postmodern thought. In principle a 'participatory epistemology' might limit itself to a recognition that the notion of the autonomous human agent is untenable and, correspondingly, might commit itself to understanding human beings as part of the world which they observe and interpret. Davies (1984) treats the same general theme in *God and the New Physics* in this more limited sense. Despite the element of qualified agnosticism in Davies' book, the entries under 'God' in the index reveal an understanding of the relationship of God to the world which moves within the field of thought of traditional theism. But Tarnas's references to the world's truth realising itself, and to nature bringing forth its own order, in and through the human mind, confer an intentionality on the world itself which is foreign to traditional theistic understandings. The immanent truth within the world is latent and inchoate until actualised through the activity of human participants, and the knowledge and understanding thus produced are the outcome of their participation, as parts of the world, in the world-process and the coming-to-be of knowledge. Still more does Tarnas discount the autonomy accorded to the human individual as epistemological agent in modern rationalism. Despite their special role in the formulation of knowledge, human observers express a drive towards

consciousness which has far deeper roots than their own rationality.

In Tarnas (1996) we see a movement, from a discussion pertaining merely to epistemology, to a far broader focus on the nature of the world to which epistemology relates. And while, as Tarnas shows, the epistemological question is pivotal to understanding the postmodern condition, it is in his spirituality that the heart of his affirmative postmodernism is to be found. That 'heart' can be quite lavishly expressed by Tarnas, who provides the following commendation on the dust-jacket of Andrew Harvey's compendium of spiritual writings in Castle Books' 'Essential' Series, *The Essential Mystics - The Soul's Journey into Truth* (Harvey, 1994):

"Andrew Harvey is ... a messenger of the Divine Mother: her favoured child, the mystical, puer-inspired, charismatic ... passionate, poetic, on fire with his love for the infinite, and bearing an urgent message for our time."

However, this is to find Tarnas at his most poetic, more so even than in some of the lyrical passages in *The Passion of the Western Mind*: he personifies the 'Divine Mother' to a degree generally uncharacteristic of his own approach and that of other protagonists of 'the Goddess' (eg Matthews, 1989; Ruether, 1992). But, if Tarnas here depicts Andrew Harvey's authorship in a manner redolent of the prophetic role of an Isaiah or Jeremiah as spokesperson for the 'living God' of the Old Testament, that is to be understood as poetic licence. We must interpret Tarnas's words within the framework of participatory epistemology: Harvey's role is 'favoured' in that he displays special facility in employing the 'full complement of faculties' referred to in the last quote from Tarnas; and therefore the 'world's truth' can be given particularly lucid expression through him. The thought and intentionality of the Great Mother is not to be understood as separate from the world with which she is identified, and of which human beings provide the especial organs of expression. Nevertheless, Tarnas's understanding of truth here evidences the transition from the purely epistemological to the spiritual which has already been commented on. That spirituality is foreign to the orthodox Christian theism of CS Lewis on at least two counts, both of which have a significance which extends well beyond Tarnas in the spectrum of

affirmative postmodernism: an exclusive emphasis on immanence in the understanding of the divine; and the ascription of feminine gender to God. But, before going on, in the following two subsections, to consider this type of spirituality in more detail, as a feature common to much affirmative postmodernism, it is important to note that Tarnas's epistemology is much closer to that of Lewis than we might otherwise conclude. Lewis's comment on the 'utter inadequacy of reason' to the "richness and spirituality of real things" quoted in Harwood (1979:26) has already been cited in Chapter Five. The fact that it was made to an Anthroposophist and close friend of Lewis, heightens its relevance to the present discussion. It will, therefore figure significantly in our evaluation of Lewis in the next chapter.

6.2.3 Affirmative postmodernism and divine immanence

Tarnas's work has been identified in the previous subsection as being of special significance on account of the intellectual underpinning which he provides for an affirmative postmodernism. But, with regard to spirituality, his thought moves very much within the orbit of affirmative postmodernism in general. That broad generality of affirmative or (more specifically) 'constructive' postmodernism, excludes the 'spirituality' of Don Cupitt, although his 'deconstructivism' is distinctly postmodern. But affirmative postmodern spirituality often has a particular character which differentiates it from that of the Christian tradition. Tarnas displays no reserve in employing the term 'pantheism' (a position strongly repudiated by Lewis) in the arguments leading up to the setting forth of his postmodern position. From Tarnas, we have noted earlier in this chapter that, in the Romantic re-discovery of God within modernity, it was "not the God of orthodoxy or deism but of mysticism, pantheism and immanent cosmic process" which was discovered (Tarnas, 1996:373). As will be seen, in re-asserting this characteristic element of the Romantic tradition for postmodernism, Tarnas is in good company, although decidedly not that of CS Lewis. However, many of those who seem to share the substance of the spirituality advocated by Tarnas, are not at all happy to accept the label of 'pantheism'. As the issue of pantheism is identified by Lewis (1960) as a key one in debating the nature of the Christian tradition, the positions of these other authors requires close attention. In particular, three

of them will be dealt with: Marcus J Borg, Distinguished Professor of Religion and Culture at Oregon State University, and author of two best selling books re-evaluating Christian ideas on Jesus and God; Daphne Hampson, of the theological faculty of St Andrew's University, Scotland, and author of *Theology and Feminism* (1990) in the Blackwell 'Signposts in Theology' series; and Rosemary Radford Ruether, much-quoted as a feminist writer, and author (amongst others) of *Gaia and God: Towards an Eco-feminist Theology of Earth-Healing* (1992).

Borg (1994; 1997) sets his discussion of spirituality and the nature of God explicitly within the context of postmodernity and the inadequacies of 'Enlightenment' thought. For example, he states that,

"The modern worldview, derived from the Enlightenment, sees reality in material terms, as constituted by the world of matter, within the space-time continuum. The experience of spirit persons suggests that there is more to reality than this - that there is, in addition to the tangible world of our ordinary experience, a nonmaterial level of reality, actual though nonmaterial, and charged with energy and power."
(Borg, 1994:33-34)

Borg's reference to 'spirit persons', amongst whom he includes shamans in general as well as Jesus, relates also to his own personal experiences of what he identifies as 'nature mysticism', and to his belief that such experiences are available to those who are open to,

"the sacred at the centre of existence, the holy mystery that is all around us and within us ... the nonmaterial ground and source and presence in which ... 'we live and move and have our being'."
(Borg, 1994:14)

This 'ground and source and presence', the all pervasive holy mystery, is identified by Borg as God. Like David Ray Griffin, whose name is associated with the SUNY 'Constructive Postmodernism' series, and to whom Borg refers several times, Borg repudiates 'supernatural theism'. Borg (1997) notes that the emphasis on divine immanence, which he seeks to uphold, is a well-established element within the broad Christian tradition although, in the modern era, the elevation of belief in the transcendence of God led to the general loss of the

sense of the immanence of God within Christianity. But, despite his appeal to Christian tradition, Borg appears to go beyond the limits of that tradition in emphasising immanence in a manner similar to that of Tarnas (1996) who, however, does so without embarrassment at the pantheistic associations which this implies.

The congruence between the thought of Borg and Tarnas is very apparent but, while Tarnas (1996:373) is content to contrast the God of "mysticism, pantheism and immanent cosmic process" with the "juridical, monotheistic patriarch" who is the "God of orthodoxy", Borg (like Griffin) steers away from the label of 'pantheism', preferring 'panentheism'. As noted previously, Ware (1979) applies this term to describe the balance between immanence and transcendence within the strongly Trinitarian personalism of Eastern Orthodox theology. But the concept of God of Borg and Griffin, if it is indeed not pantheistic, is certainly closer to pantheism than the type of panentheism described by Ware. Borg (1997) dwells at some length on Buber's 'I-You' notion (*sic*) in emphasising the importance of personal relationship to the 'sacred' but one of the main points in Borg's exposition of the 'I-You' relationship is the dissolution of ego-awareness and ego-boundaries in deep experiences of the 'sacred'. While it is easy to match what Borg states, with references in Eastern and Western Christian mysticism to the sense of momentary dissolution, that mysticism generally has a counter-balance in a clear affirmation of the ultimate reality of the personal. In the extended citation of experiences from within and outside of Christianity, which Borg (1997) provides, nothing of this kind of affirmation is to be found. At the least one is left with the sense that Borg, and Griffin also, are somewhat ambivalent about the reality of the personal. For a more forthright addressing of this issue we must turn to feminist theology, in particular the work of Daphne Hampson and Rosemary Ruether. In doing so, however, it must be noted that there is no opposition between the work of Borg and feminist theology. His *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time* (Borg, 1994) carries commendations from Ruether as well as Elizabeth Johnson, author of *She Who Is* (1993), while *The God We Never Knew* (Borg, 1997) makes numerous references to feminist theologians. Although Borg makes little direct reference to the relation of God to gender in these two books, he does not discount

its importance. Tarnas (1996), though, leads up to this issue as the climax of his account of the development of the 'Western Mind'. As Steyn (1994) emphasises, this question is a cardinal one in affirmative postmodernism in general - it is not an element peculiar to feminist theology. What will emerge in the discussion which follows, is that the questions of the personal and of gender, in relation to God, are closely related and together are of crucial significance in the evaluation of the work of CS Lewis in terms of postmodernism. After considering these questions in the context of the feminist theology of Hampson and Ruether, we will turn to their formulation by Tarnas (1996), which will lead on to a comparison with the thought of CS Lewis in the following chapter.

Neither Hampson (1990) nor Ruether (1992) make any claim to postmodernism as such, but Ruether's dual treatment of the ecological and feminist themes is very much in line with the characterisation of postmodernity by Steyn (1994) and Harvey (1997), while Hampson describes herself as 'Post-Christian'. Whether or not this qualifies Hampson to be considered postmodern is irrelevant to the fact that she deals with the issue of the personal in relation to God in a way apposite to the present discussion. In her view of the doctrine of God she is similar to Johnson (1993), who identifies 'Classical Monotheism' as a Western theological development, dating from Augustine onwards, which stresses divine transcendence to the effective exclusion of immanence, and forms a central pillar of Western patriarchalism. Hampson (1990:151) states that,

"The basic conceptualisation of God in the west has been that of monotheism. God has been seen as transcendent above mankind, having a will and all-powerful, so that 'He' is an agent who can act on the world. He has been appropriately, and not surprisingly, described using masculine metaphors. For many people God is a kind of spiritual being, separate from the world, yet its creator and able to intervene in it at will. Of course, God is also thought to be related to the world, but an understanding of God as immanent has taken second place to the transcendent God."

In Hampson's discussion we see the same theological concerns which move Borg, and Griffin, away from the traditional Christian theism upheld by CS Lewis and towards their understanding of panentheism. Although she does not use the term, Hampson arrives at

much the same theological conclusion as she continues:

"What interests me here is not monotheism per se (there could be a monotheism which conceived God as spirit, interrelated with all) but the particular connotations which have been given to the monotheistic conception of God."

In developing her position, Hampson contemptuously rejects the charge of pantheism which she dismisses as the standard strategy used by traditionalist Christians against those who oppose orthodox Christian theology. The total identification of God with the world, in her interpretation of pantheism, she regards as meaningless, but her position is clearly monistic in the same sense as the panentheism advocated by Griffin (1989b), and could be equated with those Hindu understandings in which God is not totally identified with the world, even though not existing apart from it (Burnett, 1992). Hampson (1990:165) goes on to state that:

"God comes to be seen to be available and present through all that is. It is not pantheism. God is not equated with the world. But God may be perceived in all beauty and in human relationships."

This statement is perfectly compatible with the Eastern Orthodox 'panentheism' of Ware (1979) and particularly with the Evagrian mysticism which he describes, but it is sufficiently broad to encompass also a Hindu monism, such as that of Sankara, in which, at the truest level of reality, divine as well as human personal qualities are negated in the ultimately impersonal nature of God (Burnett, 1992). The same would seem to be true of the panentheism of Marcus Borg and David Griffin, given their rejection of the 'supernatural theism' which remains characteristic of the Eastern Christian understanding of God for all its stress on the divine immanence. That Hampson's conception of God is akin to Hindu monism, and perhaps even pantheism, rather than to traditional Christian theism, is explicitly demonstrated in the manner of her refusal, in the course of arguing her Post-Christian position, to ascribe gender to God, even in the manner common to many feminist theologians:

"Of course referring to god as Mother rather than as Father does give one a different sense of God. But it continues to be in effect the Christian God, placed within the

Christian story. God is an agent, an actor on the scene, conceived anthropomorphically, if now by female names."
(Hampson, 1990:163).

The inevitable corollary to this rejection of the notion of God-as-agent and, with it, God-as-entity, is the assertion of the impersonalism of God. In this regard Hampson (1990:168) is perceptive in identifying prayer as a crucially determinative issue:

"Prayer, one might think, is almost by definition a turning to one conceived as a 'thou', one who in our imagination stands over-against us as a kind of entity ... [but, she continues] ... It may well be more natural ... to speak of resting in God. One may think of oneself as being open and present to what one conceives to be a greater reality than oneself, knowing oneself as loved and upheld."

It is apparent in what Hampson writes that the question of the divine immanence is inextricably linked to the question of the personal. But in its turn this issue cannot be divorced from that of gender and God, although it will be shown that Hampson's Post-Christian position is, in this regard, antithetical to the dominant inclination within affirmative postmodernism.

6.2.4 Affirmative postmodernism and the 'Great Mother'

In the hands of other feminist theologians, most notably Rosemary Ruether (1992), the apparent inconsistency of Daphne Hampson, in ascribing love to an impersonal "spirit, interrelated with all", is provided with some resolution in an 'ecofeminist theology' in which it is the 'loving and upholding' *Gaia*, the personified, although impersonal, Mother Nature Goddess, who nurtures her children from the bounty of the earth. Like Borg, but unlike Hampson whose Post-Christian stance involves a forthright rejection of Christianity *per se*, Ruether (1992) prefers to regard her theologising as remaining in continuity with the Christian tradition, even though it ranges beyond the parameters of what those such as CS Lewis would recognise as authentically Christian. As in the postmodernism of Borg and Griffin, she embraces Process theology and the thought of Teilhard de Chardin, emphasising the notion that matter, at all levels including that of sub-atomic particles, possesses 'mentality' as one of its attributes. In this there is a close similarity with the ideas of Tarnas,

especially with regard to the role of reflexive consciousness in her cosmology:

"... we are faced with the recognition that humans alone, amid all the earth's creatures and on all the planets of these vast galaxies, are capable of reflexive consciousness. We are, in that sense, the 'mind' of the universe, the place where the universe becomes conscious of its self."

(Ruether, 1992:249)

This statement embodies the same considerations which lead to Tarnas's development of a participatory epistemology and, in addition, Ruether develops this position in the same direction which Tarnas takes in proceeding towards a monistic, cosmology:

"... what we have traditionally called 'God', 'the mind', or rational pattern holding all things together, and what we have called 'matter', the 'ground' of physical objects, come together. The disintegration of the many into infinitely small 'bits', and the 'One', or unifying whole that connects all things together, coincide."

(Ruether, 1992:248-90)

Although Ruether, like Borg, urges that we should approach the universe as 'I and Thou', like Borg also, the sense of the personal does not appear to hold beyond a relatively superficial level. In addressing the 'Thou' we are merely reflections of that 'Thou' addressing our 'Self'; and in addressing God we do the same, because the identification of the world (Gaia) with God means that, "both of these voices, of Gaia and God, are our own voices" (Ruether, 1992:254).

What is evident is that the understanding of God is closely linked with the question of the nature of the personal. Sutphin (1979) describes the sophisticated treatment of the personal and the relationship between immanence and transcendence in Cobb's panentheistic Process theology, and the philosophy of Whitehead on which Cobb built. But, in the work of Ruether, who has much in common with other writers, designated as 'constructive' postmodernists, who are discussed in this chapter, panentheism appears to resolve itself into an understanding which approaches that of the 'Cosmic Person' of Hinduism. Beyond this, in Hindu philosophy, lies the impersonal absolute of Brahman (Burnett, 1992). Ruether does, however, place value on the personal, although this cannot but be tempered by the

dissolution which is seen as the fate of the individual self. In describing her feminist, ecological spirituality, Ruether (1992:251) states that it is built on three premises: "the transience of selves, the living interdependency of all things, and the value of the personal in communion". She seeks to hold her first and third premises together, despite the tension between them:

"We are called to affirm the integrity of our personal centres of being, in mutuality with the personal centres of being of all other beings across species and, at the same time, accept the transience of these personal selves."

Ruether is more ambitious in her quest to uphold the personal than Hampson, for example, but for all her valuing of the personal and of "mutuality with the personal centres of being of all other beings", the ideal of the personal has to be relinquished in recognition of the ultimate transience of all things, except the whole itself:

"Like humans, the animals and plants are living centres of organic life who exist for a season ... our bodies disintegrate into organic matter, to enter the cycle of decomposition and recomposition as other entities ... Compassion for all living things fills our spirits, breaking down the illusion of otherness."
(Ruether, 1992:251-2)

Hampson (1990) discerns in Ruether's writing a strong element of materialism, or secularity, and something of the grounds for this opinion can be detected in this last quote. Nevertheless, Ruether expresses much which is common to those 'constructive' postmodernists who are more inclined to an appreciation of the numinous as an aspect of reality. This commonality is particularly evident with regard to the place of the 'Great Mother' in the thought of Richard Tarnas, and is expressed poetically by Ruether (1992:253) as she concludes the train of thought in the previous quotation:

"The small selves and the Great Self are finally one, for as She bodies forth in us, all the beings respond in the bodying forth of their creative work that makes the world. ... Our final gesture, as we surrender ourselves into the Matrix of life, then can become a prayer of ultimate trust: "Mother, into your hands I commit my spirit. Use me in your infinite creativity."

We have dwelt at some length on the understanding of God in 'constructive' postmodern writers but with good reason: it is here that the heart of CS Lewis's thought lies, and it is at this point that a crucial evaluation must be made, in terms of the research question of this thesis, regarding the 'postmodernity' of Lewis's thought. In this evaluation it will be evident that on the related issues, for theology, of immanence, personhood and gender, there is an acute lack of congruence between Lewis's Christian position and the dominant trend of affirmative or, at least, constructive postmodernism. As part of the evaluation of Lewis, we will reflect on the views which Lewis expressed regarding the type of understanding of evolutionist panentheistic theology on which the postmodernism of Borg, Griffin and Ruether relies so heavily. In the view of each of these authors, their interpretation of Process theology provides the means for the metamorphosis of Christianity, from its traditional and modern embodiments, to a postmodern expression. Whether the goal which they wish to attain may continue validly to be regarded as Christian, or, conversely, whether Lewis, as representative of the 'Great Tradition' of Christianity, can validly be considered a prophetic figure in respect of postmodernism, are issues at stake in this evaluation. At this stage it is worth noting that a similar reliance on 'Process' theory is evident in Tarnas's thought also, although he draws independently on Hegel too for his developmental cosmology. But in Tarnas's account of *The Passion of the Western Mind*, Christianity fulfills the same role as 'Enlightenment' modernism: both are elements of a necessary antithesis in the progress of an Hegelian type of dialectic which culminates in Tarnas's vision of the postmodern. In that vision Tarnas concurs with other advocates of affirmative postmodernism, including for example Griffin (1989b), Ruether (1992), Steyn (1994), Borg (1997) and Harvey (1997), in seeing the God of Christian orthodoxy superseded by a more immanent divinity. However, before proceeding to the final evaluation of Lewis's work, it remains to consider, in this subsection, some of the further detail of Tarnas's vision and, in the next subsection, the understanding of the nature of the universe which is part of the vision of Tarnas and of 'constructive' postmodernism in general.

Tarnas (1996) portrays the negations of 'deconstructive' postmodernism as being merely the shadow of the emergence of a vigorous, spiritually oriented, affirmative postmodernism. Amongst the signs of this development, which he records briefly, are the spiritualising trends within both the ecological and feminist movements, which converge on the figure of the Earth-Mother. At a different level, Tarnas points to the proposal of the Gaia hypothesis within mainstream science, representing a move away from the modern atomistic and mechanical model of reality. In this first major restatement of an organic model of the world within science since the Renaissance, it is not without significance that a name of the ancient pre-Aryan and pre-Christian Mother Goddess was appropriated for it. But, as we have seen, the reach of the resuscitated Gaia extends beyond the new science into theology and spirituality. And, if the status of Gaia in the theology of Ruether (1992) and the postmodern Goddess-paganism of Matthews (1989) may be regarded as being as non-realist as that of God in Cupitt's postmodern religion, she is treated distinctly more realistically in Tarnas, as in Harvey (1997) also. This spiritual realism has already been encountered in the references of Borg (1994) to 'the sacred' being at the centre of existence, as the all-encompassing and all-pervading 'holy mystery'. It is elucidated also in the opening lines of Harvey's (1997) case for Neo-paganism:

"Although every day is sacred and all the Earth is holy, yet there are times and places that seem to be more special. Not all days are alike and not all places are the same. Sacredness collects as if in pools and sometimes splashes over into the ordinary, everyday parts of life."

There are implications of this view which must be addressed in the following discussion of the nature of the universe, and in the discussion of 'Presence' in the evaluation of Lewis's position. At this point, however, it must be related to the 'Goddess'. Borg retains the word 'God' in speaking of this pervasive spiritual quality in all existence whereas Harvey, while using 'God' or 'Goddess' interchangeably, inclines towards the latter. Their use of the terms, however, reflects the same aversion to conceiving God as agent and entity which is expressed by Hampson (1990), although we have already noted her refusal to attribute gender to God either way. Richard Tarnas unequivocally asserts both the realistic and the

feminine quality of the spiritual - the God which was first rediscovered in Romanticism but which, in the postmodern era is recognised as the Great Mother testified to by Tarnas. But Tarnas goes further than others in outlining the ramifications of this postmodern, Goddess spirituality. In the great dialectic described in *The Passion of the Western Mind*, the Mother-Goddess of Neolithic Europe provides the initial 'thesis'. In Tarnas's account, the antithesis which came to oppose it had its roots, on the one hand, in the rational, masculine mind of Classical Greece and, on the other hand, in the patriarchal Hebrew religion of Yahweh, who was transcendent over the world and not immanent within it. These two sources coalesced in the Christianity which came to dominate the Western world, and their influence continued in the development of modernity and its domination over the rest of the world. The achievements of the 'Western Mind' are not denied by Tarnas but, to him, they are one-sided and have occurred at the expense of faculties which are designated as feminine, as well as the contribution which they might have made. To Tarnas, however, postmodernity is the era in which a synthesis is coming about, although,

"to achieve this reintegration of the repressed feminine, the masculine must undergo a sacrifice, an ego-death. The Western mind must be willing to open itself to a reality the nature of which could shatter its most established beliefs about itself and the world" (Tarnas, 1996:444).

In a rather more prosaic form, CS Lewis's friend Bede Griffiths (1983:152) had made the same point earlier, in stating that, "The Western world ... has now to rediscover the power of the feminine, intuitive mind", adding that only in this way would the Christian churches become capable of answering to the needs of the contemporary world. It must be added that in a series of letters between them (see Lewis, 1988) Lewis showed considerable reserve about his friend's inclination to Hinduism. As we will see later, Lewis also expressed at least some recognition of a need for a balance between the masculine and the feminine (see eg Lewis, 1963), but in this regard it remains to be seen whether Griffiths and Tarnas do not go further than Lewis would be prepared to allow. Certainly, the ultimate salvation of human beings in the mysticism of the Great Mother, differs from that in orthodox Christian thought:

"mystical union with nature or with the divine or with the Great Mother Goddess, dissolution of the ego in ecstatic union with the universe." (Tarnas, 1996:427)

6.2.5 Affirmative postmodernism and the 'sacred cosmos'

The notion of the sacred cosmos has already been aired, for example in Borg's discussion (1994:14) of God as the holy mystery which is the "nonmaterial ground and source and presence" in which we exist. There may be no real divergence between Borg's position and the previously quoted comment of Harvey (1997:1) that "all the Earth is holy", and his reference to sacredness as an almost substantial quality present in the world, but there is something of a difference of emphasis. In both there is a threefold concern with 'the sacred' (or God), the world, and human experience. In both, also, there is an emphasis on the close association of 'the sacred' and the world, evident in Borg's promotion of the principle of immanence over transcendence. But, while Borg, in preferring a pantheistic position, still seeks to maintain a concept of God which is not totally identified with the world, the Neopaganism of Harvey is more thorough-going in its commitment to the immanence of the sacred. Therefore, Harvey is much readier to accept the label 'pantheism' although he is equally amenable to the designation of panentheism. Consequently, while Borg's concern with the experience of God tends to play down (but not exclude) a focus on the world, Harvey's Neopaganism is much more heartily committed to celebrating the sacredness of the world or cosmos. Harvey might possibly attribute this difference in emphasis to Borg's residual Christianity, the negative effects of which he sees as being overcome by the Neopagan repudiation of Christianity. However, this would be too sweeping a judgement, as is revealed by the range of authors included in the millennium issue of the journal *The Ecologist* (vol 30:1, Jan/Feb 2000), which is subtitled 'Re-embedding religion in society, nature and the cosmos' and, in the light of its contents, could very well carry a dedication to 'the Sacred Cosmos'. In itself this journal issue is eloquent testimony to the reality of affirmative postmodernism, illustrating as it does the postmodern trend, firstly from the fixation of earlier modern, scientific biology on the study of organisms and species as discrete, self-existent realities, to the ecological framework of the interrelation of organisms

with each other and with the environment; and then from this view, which is still consonant with the materialist, modern worldview, to a focus on the interconnectedness of a respiritualised worldview. There are a variety of articles from Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu and other perspectives, all on the topic of sacred cosmology, and requiring some comment later in this thesis on the compatibility of this notion, not only with orthodox Christian, but also theistic worldviews in general. This is especially relevant in view of the position of Lewis which will be discussed in detail in the next chapter. An article by Bede Griffiths on primal religions and the understanding of the cosmos is of particular interest in view of the friendship of Lewis with Griffiths which was referred to earlier. But again, in this context, it will be shown later that the attitude of Lewis to 'sacred cosmology' is not in harmony with that of Griffiths and certainly not with most of the affirmative postmodernism of the millennium issue of *The Ecologist*.

A different light is thrown on the issue of the 'Sacred Cosmos' if we reflect on the development of the cosmological thought of another feminist theologian, Sallie McFague. McFague's initial thought on the matter (McFague, 1982) is conducted from a very different position from that of the authors cited previously. She prefaces her work with the statement that, "it comes out of a post-Enlightenment, Protestant, feminist perspective" (McFague, 1982:x) - that is a perspective which is post-Enlightenment not in a postmodern sense but in that it flows from the premises established in the 'Enlightenment'. She goes on to describe this perspective as sceptical and relativistic, "more aware of the discontinuities between God and the world than the continuities", and characterises it as being a 'Protestant sensibility' as opposed to a 'Catholic sensibility' (although she is careful to state that these refer to ideal types which do not correspond to contemporary Protestantism and Catholicism *per se*). Her actual target is the medieval worldview insofar as it is retained in modern Christianity:

"We do not live in a sacramental universe in which the things of this world, its joys and catastrophes, harvests and famines, births and deaths, are understood as connected and permeated by divine power and love."

(McFague, 1982:1)

Her main concern is the negative effects of continuing to use the language of the sacramental universe in the modern world, specifically in the idolatrous use of masculine imagery in a situation in which the 'Enlightenment' principle of equality demands a new understanding of gender. She argues that the Protestant abandonment of the fourfold medieval approach to exegesis, and the accompanying recognition of the literal sense alone, has resulted in a harmful mix in the combination of literalism with the outmoded language of the sacramental universe. The implications for feminism which McFague draws from this are not of direct significance in this thesis but what is relevant is her view of the demise of the symbolic sensibility "and its vision of multilayered realities, with the literal level suggestive of meanings beyond itself" (McFague, 1982:5). This involves the belief that,

"everything is connected, that the beings of this world are analogously related to God (Being Itself) ... In such a universe, everything holds together, everything fits, everything is related.'

McFague points out that, in this kind of view, symbols represent realities at other levels by participating in them. In the following chapter it will be shown that this view is precisely that of Lewis on at least a number of important issues. This might be taken simply as evidence of Lewis's traditionalism, a judgement which is supported by Lewis's own comments (eg see Lewis, 1990a), although there is another side to this issue which will emerge in the subsequent discussion in this thesis.

There is much which could be drawn from the contrast between the medieval and modern worldviews which is encapsulated in McFague's argument.. The 'connectedness' (and associated organic understanding) of the nature of reality, which McFague notes, stands in opposition to the fundamental principles and view of the universe of the modern worldview. It is opposed not only to the mechanical model of reality but also to the atomism, which goes back to ancient Greek philosophy but was incorporated in the modern worldview too (Tarnas, 1996). That atomism, found most obviously in the atomic theory of matter, is reflected also in other facets of modern thought, including the notion of society as composed of discrete individuals, which underlies theories of liberal democracy (Gamble, 1981). As

we have seen, it is in fact here where the emphasis of McFague falls, specifically on the principle of equality. In pursuing this principle in relation to feminism, McFague (1982) is true to the commitment to 'Enlightenment' modernity with which she prefaces her work. This commitment to gender equality is certainly not relinquished by feminist postmodern writers. Robinson (1999) points out that 'deconstructive' postmodern theory has given rise to a postmodern feminism which is concerned with the exercise of power in terms of the theorising of Foucault and Derrida. On the other hand, authors who have been cited in relation to affirmative postmodernism, such as Ruether and Tarnas, are no less committed to the feminist principle of equality because of their postmodernism, indeed it finds a fuller expression in their *Gaia* spirituality. But it must be noted that their postmodernism does represent the negation of the modern thought which provides the framework of McFague's argument. In fact, the worldview of affirmative modernism, whether in the explicitly counter-Christian Neo-pagan position of Harvey (1997), or in the more open eclecticism of the millennium issue of *The Ecologist*, as well as Tarnas (1996), is of the same kind as the medieval sacramental universe which McFague (1982) rejects. In her later thought, McFague (1987) herself, under the influence of affirmative postmodernism, reverts substantially to this type of worldview.

Even as McFague wrote her epitaph for the symbolic understanding of reality, pronouncing that, 'Certainly we cannot return to the time of the sacramental universe' (McFague, 1982:2), the tide had already turned with regard to the 'Spirit of the age'. In her later book, McFague (1987) replaces the contrast between the 'Protestant' and 'Catholic' sensibilities with that between the Enlightenment and the postmodern sensibility. In addition to a reconceptualisation of her theological task in terms of remythologisation, McFague speaks of continuities instead of the discontinuity she had previously stressed. She states, for example, that "the question of what an entity is most basically is answered in terms of its relationships" (McFague, 1987:8) and, with regard to the new worldview as a whole, "It is a considerably more complex picture than the old [modern] view, with a hierarchy of levels of organisation" (1987:10) in which a new, organic model "unites by symbiotic mutual

interdependencies" and in which it can be said of all things, "They are patients and agents. In short they are subjects" (1987:11). In contrasting the two books of McFague, it is evident that after a five year absence a multilayered, interconnected view of the world is back, now in the name of postmodernism instead of medievalism. The point which should be taken is not that McFague is inconsistent - the shift from a modern to a postmodern worldview is not limited to her, although she was evidently caught particularly acutely by the change in tide of 'worldviews in transition' (Steyn, 1994). Rather, McFague's succinct statement of the nature of the world, as understood in affirmative postmodernism, needs to be noted. Hampson (1990), however, criticises McFague, along with other feminist theologians, for her 'secularity': she brings to her use of a postmodern paradigm the still heavy hand of the anti-spiritual emphasis of modernity. But if the multilayered, interconnected view of the universe of McFague (1987) were to incorporate the new spirituality, she would be brought fully back to the kind of 'sacramental universe' whose demise she proclaimed five years earlier. It might well not be the medieval Christian version but, even if post-Christian, it would share more in common with worldview of CS Lewis than with the mechanistic, materialistic worldview of modernity.

A further aspect of the type of worldview characteristic of affirmative postmodernism, which is to be found in McFague's discussions, is its archetypal nature. In this regard her preference for the term 'sacramental universe' is more explicit than 'sacred cosmos', even if advocates of the latter, such as Tarnas (1996), imply a similar meaning. The sacramental universe is a symbolic one because of the interconnectedness of its hierarchical levels. As pointed out earlier, McFague notes that this symbolic function operates by representing realities at other levels, through participation in them. While McFague makes no reference to archetypes as such, Tarnas discusses the idea at length in relation to his postmodernism. Hampson might criticise McFague for the emptiness of her spiritual metaphors but Tarnas is quite explicit in his spiritual emphasis: while drawing from Jung in developing his understanding of the nature of archetypes, Tarnas notes Jung's inability to move beyond his Kantianism in seeing archetypes merely as reflective of the structure of the human mind.

But, to Tarnas, the operation of archetypes within the human mind reflects their connection with the deeper structure of reality as a whole. Tarnas focuses on the masculine and the feminine as specific examples of archetypal reality, of particular importance within postmodernity. As we shall see, Lewis's view of archetypes is similar but with very different conclusions.

6.3 Affirmative postmodernism: some conclusions

There is a variety of developments which may go under the title of 'affirmative postmodernism'. Apart from 'solar religion' and the 'mysticism of secondariness' advocated by Cupitt (1997;1998) there are ecologically and communitarian oriented movements of the kind referred to by Rosenau (1992) as well as by David Ray Griffin in the SUNY series of publications on postmodernism. But in addition to postmodern, 'New Wave' lifestyles mentioned by Rosenau there are also new religious or spiritually-oriented worldviews which are wider in scope than only the New Age religion to which she refers. Features which are found in postmodern religion and spirituality have been given particular attention in this chapter because they relate to what is most prominent in the thought of CS Lewis. In the next chapter the nature of this relationship, and the positive or negative attitude of Lewis towards features such as a predominantly immanentist view of the divine, an equivocal evaluation of the personal, a predominant emphasis on the feminine in relation to God, and the symbolic nature of the universe, will be investigated. In addition, the 'participatory epistemology', which is associated with postmodern spirituality in the development of an affirmative postmodern position by Richard Tarnas, will be shown to be particularly significant as we proceed to consider, in Chapter Eight, the relationship of Lewis's Christian worldview to Steiner's Anthroposophy.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CS LEWIS AND AFFIRMATIVE POSTMODERNISM

7.1 CS Lewis's ambivalence towards common features of affirmative postmodernism.

Although it will be shown that Lewis's thought displays affinities with regard to affirmative postmodernism, these are more than matched by strong differences. The question which then must be considered, is whether it is feasible to regard Lewis as 'prophet of postmodernism'. In attempting an answer to this, the essential research issue of this thesis, we touch on the heart of Lewis's thought as we come to engage with the subject of the positive content which complements the 'negative' aspects, considered in Chapters Four and Five. Some reference has already been made to 'affirmative' aspects in the course of these analyses of the 'negative' elements in the thought of Eastern Christianity and CS Lewis. However, in earlier chapters, these positive aspects emerged largely as corollaries to the negative or 'deconstructive' facets of postmodern theory which were discussed there. In this chapter, these previous observations will be supplemented with a more comprehensive analysis which covers other features common to the different 'postmodernisms' which may be grouped together and characterised as 'affirmative'. It is intended thus to arrive at a fuller picture of the status of CS Lewis's work *vis-a-vis* the postmodern: this chapter must consider whether it is not only with regard to postmodern scepticism regarding modern thought that Lewis can be considered to have a significant 'prophetic' role, but also the affirmative alternatives to the content of failed modernism, which have been reviewed in this thesis. As has been noted already, there is perhaps even more room for debate regarding Lewis's status in this case than there is in relation to 'deconstructive' postmodernism. In addition, even where there is compatibility to be found, it is present in a complex admixture with contrary elements. This will emerge more fully in the course of this chapter but it is necessary, first, to set the analysis of this chapter within its historical context.

It is important to note that it has not been suggested in this thesis that the prescience which CS Lewis's thought displayed, with regard to the postmodernism which would establish itself in the academic world in the decades after his death, was a manifestation of some kind of psychic intuition. Rather, it may be attributed to the acuteness of Lewis's intellect in perceiving the inconsistencies and flaws in modern thought. Even this, though, is to place an emphasis on Lewis's originality which he himself (Lewis, 1955) repudiated by affirming his reliance on the sources of his thought. Those sources were pre-eminently the authors of previous ages, primarily the broad tradition of 'Mere Christianity' to which Lewis was so committed but also, to some extent the literature of pre-Christian Greece and Rome (Lewis, 1986c), as well as Eastern philosophy and religion (see eg Lewis, 1978). His reading of the critical tradition within modern thought, despite his aversion to the thought of authors such as Kant, Nietzsche, Marx and Freud (Lewis, 1977), must also be recognised as a further source of his suspicion towards the pretensions of modern thought. This critical current within modernity is identified by Tarnas (1996) as the direct path which led to postmodern thought, and Lewis's familiarity with it must therefore be regarded as an important factor in the development of his own thought. All of these sources, within and outside of modern thought, can be considered to have contributed to Lewis's scepticism with regard to modern thought in general. That this scepticism may have been coloured by a reactionary resistance to 'progress' has been acknowledged but it has also been demonstrated in Chapters Four and Five how Lewis dealt with substantially the same issues in modern thought which have subsequently been the target of the sceptical attacks of postmodern theorists of the 'deconstructive' kind. In doing this Lewis was not merely being reactionary or traditionalist but was engaging with modern thought, trying it in the scales of an intellectual discernment which he derived from the wider field of human thought, and finding it wanting. In the same way that we must recognise the need to see Lewis's thought in relation to the critical tradition in modern thought, so also, in the case of affirmative postmodernism, the development of Lewis's thought should not be understood in isolation but should rather be considered in the context within which it developed. This is not to say that Lewis's position was determined by the movements which will be described - indeed, to a great extent it

consists in opposition to those movements. Nevertheless, that opposition, deriving from his adherence to orthodox Christianity, does colour his thought. In particular, a consideration of Lewis's personal historical context leads on to the topic of Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophy which, it will be shown later, is closely involved in the history of the emergence of affirmative postmodernism and also with the history of Lewis's life.

7.2 CS Lewis's worldview and affirmative postmodernism: common roots ?

The spiritual developments of the '*Flight from Reason*', documented by Webb (1971), must be regarded as foremost amongst the historical factors associated with the views of CS Lewis relating to affirmative postmodernism. Lewis's sentiments towards this type of spirituality varied widely in the course of his life up until his conversion to Christianity, but they were always strongly felt (Lewis, 1959). At the age of thirteen he gave up his inherited Christianity, influenced by the example of a school matron who, with hindsight, he describes as "floundering in the mazes of Theosophy, Rosicrucianism, Spiritualism; the whole Anglo-American Occultist tradition" (Lewis, 1959:52). Lewis testifies feelingly to the attraction of this occultism, partly as it offered him an escape from the orthodox religion of his upbringing which he had come to feel as an oppressive burden but, more than this, because,

"now, for the first time, there burst upon me the idea that there might be real marvels all about us, that the visible world might be only a curtain to conceal huge realms uncharted by my very simple theology. And that started in me something with which, on and off, I have had plenty of trouble since - the desire for the preternatural simply as such, the passion for the Occult. ... It is a spiritual lust; and like the lust of the body it has the fatal power of making everything else in the world seem uninteresting while it lasts." (Lewis: 1959:53)

Lewis's position on the spiritual inclination which came to be expressed in affirmative postmodernism is complexly related to the events of his own spiritual development. In this regard, Lewis (1959:60) contrasts himself with post-Christian modernists:

"It took me as long to acquire inhibitions as others (they say) have taken to get rid of them. That is why I often find myself at such cross-purposes with the modern world: I have been a converted Pagan living among apostate Puritans."

The occultist tendencies in Lewis's spiritual journey point to a commonality with the spirituality of the other, affirmative side of postmodernism which contrasts with the starkness of rationalist modern thought flowing from the 'Enlightenment'. Affirmative postmodernists, such as Marcus Borg (eg Borg, 1997) and David Ray Griffin (eg Griffin, 1988) might justly repudiate any attempt to attach an 'occult' label to their views on spirituality, but the perception of commonality is not incidental or capricious. The occult spirituality of the nineteenth century reaction against modern rationalism, whose influence was mediated to Lewis initially through his school matron, bears a genealogical relationship to affirmative postmodernism. Steyn (1994) details the continuity between the New Age Movement of the late twentieth century and the Theosophical movement, which Webb (1971) identifies as one of the major components of the recoil from the 'Enlightenment' worldview in the previous century. The New Age Movement might not be regarded by other authors, such as David Ray Griffin or Richard Tarnas, as a typical expressions of constructive or affirmative postmodernism but it is unambiguously identified as a form of constructive postmodernism by Steyn (1994). Nineteenth century occultism, including Theosophy, could be regarded as bearing the same type of relationship to the general pantheistic spirituality of Romanticism as New Age spirituality bears to the postmodern spirituality of Tarnas, for example, or the panentheism of Griffin or Marcus Borg. Apart from Lewis's specific associations with occultism, his links with Romanticism are attested to in his account of his life prior to his conversion to Christianity (Lewis, 1959). But, although not unmixed with contrary desires, his interests went beyond this.

Lewis's youthful occult-fascination soon receded, while still in his teenage years, under the influence of a rationalistic tutor but, at the same time, his imagination fed hungrily on Norse and Celtic mythology, adding to his existing love for Classical mythology, and gratifying the Pagan in him, although at a level different from his intellect (Lewis, 1959):

"Such, then, was my position: to care for almost nothing but the gods and heroes, the garden of the Hesperides ... and to believe in nothing but atoms and evolution ... At times the strain was severe ...".
(Lewis, 1959:140)

The seeming incompatibility of the mixture was heightened, and the intermittent wavering of his materialistic faith was aggravated, on entry to Oxford University. Lewis stresses that this was not due to any wish-fulfillment; he had no illusions about the claims of his beloved Pagan mythology to truth (as defined by his materialist philosophy), and his escape from the oppression of his belief in the Christian God was still a source of relief (cf Lewis, 1977). Instead, the challenge came from a fascination which he developed for the poet Yeats. When Lewis read his prose, he discovered that the world of the esoteric and magic portrayed in his poetry was not, for Yeats, a thing of fancy, as myth and legend was for him:

"The difference was that Yeats believed. His 'ever living ones' were not merely feigned or merely desired. He really thought that there was a world of beings more or less like them ... To put it quite plainly, he believed seriously in Magic. ... I now learned that there were people, not traditionally orthodox, who nevertheless rejected the whole Materialist philosophy out of hand."

(Lewis, 1959:141)

If the common understanding of Yeats the poet does not appreciate this side of the man, Lewis knew better, having met him personally (Lewis, 1959). The foundations of Lewis's materialism were shaken and the taste for the Occult rose up in him again. Even more because, after Yeats, Lewis plunged into Maeterlinck, "whom everyone was reading" at the time:

"In Maeterlinck I came up against Spiritualism, Theosophy, and Pantheism. Here once more was a responsible adult (and not a Christian) who believed in a world behind, or around, the material world. ... I did not give my assent categorically. But a disturbing doubt fell into my materialism. It was merely a 'Perhaps'. Perhaps (oh joy!) there was, after all, 'something else'; and (oh reassurance!) perhaps it had nothing to do with Christian theology."

(Lewis, 1959:141)

But Lewis's feelings were strongly mixed. On the one hand, occult knowledge, "the most exquisitely unorthodox thing in the world, unorthodox both by Christian and by Rationalist standards" (Lewis, 1959:142) appealed to the rebel in him as well as the love of being one of an 'inner ring'. On the other, simultaneously, his fear of the uncanny, and his experience of caring, over a period of two weeks, for a much loved acquaintance who lost his sanity

after indulging in occult practices (although Lewis does not insist on a link), repelled him. All the while the desire for the elusive 'Joy', which coloured his life until his conversion, exerted its force in the background - although he soon recognised that this was not to be identified with the lust for the Occult. But he was left in a highly ambivalent position intellectually, clinging to the elements of mutually exclusive philosophies, so as, "to get the comforts both of a materialist philosophy and of a spiritual philosophy without the rigours of either" (Lewis, 1959:143). It was on this unstable condition that two powerful factors came to bear: the 'Christian Romanticism' of George MacDonald (see Lewis ed., 1983), first experienced in his *Phantastes, a Faerie Romance*, leading eventually to Lewis's acceptance of Christianity; but, also, the encounter with Anthroposophy. Despite Lewis's negative reaction to the occultism of the latter, it will be shown later that in some ways it was the means by which a powerful influence was exerted on his view of reality.

In summary it may be said that Lewis had engaged with much the same issues of spirituality which were to feed into the affirmative postmodernism of the authors who have been reviewed in this thesis. In some respects, conditioned by his later conversion to Christian orthodoxy, he came to conclusions radically different from theirs, although in others, evident in particular in his equivocal relationship to Anthroposophy (Harwood, 1979), he evinced a more positive attitude, even if only to a certain degree. If CS Lewis cannot be grouped together with Tarnas, Harvey, Borg, Griffin, and other authors of affirmative postmodernism, he nevertheless engaged intensively with the spiritually-oriented reaction against modernism, which first came to light in the Romanticism, which found its more extravagant expressions in movements discussed in Webb's *Flight from Reason*, and which was to blossom with renewed vigour in the closing decades of the twentieth century. The question of whether the outcome of this engagement of Lewis impacts positively or negatively on the question of his prophetic role with regard to the postmodern, requires a detailed analysis of his views on issues relating to affirmative postmodernism. As we have seen in the review in the previous chapter, these include not only spirituality but also epistemology.

7.3 Relating aspects of the work of CS Lewis to elements of affirmative postmodernism

As we have seen in the previous chapter, there is considerable diversity within the various manifestations of what may collectively be referred to as affirmative postmodernism. One fundamental division is between the range of spiritually-oriented postmodern positions and the overtly nihilistic and anti-spiritual position found in the type of affirmative postmodernism presented by Cupitt (1997; 1998). To a large degree Cupitt's view is a development of Nietzsche's philosophy and will be addressed in the comparison, later in this thesis, between Lewis's thought and the affirmative writing of Nietzsche. Therefore, this chapter will focus on the comparison of Lewis's thought with the directly spiritual aspects of the previous chapter's review of affirmative postmodernism. In conducting this comparison the same basic method will be adopted as in the analysis of Chapter Five: elements in the work of Lewis which appear to exhibit associations with particular aspects of affirmative postmodernism will be identified and evaluated with regard to the significance of the apparent links. However, especially where the discussion touches on the understanding of the divine nature, the divergence of Lewis's thought from general trends in affirmative postmodernism will become abundantly clear. Consequently, the outcome of the analysis in this chapter will, to a large degree, differ from that in Chapter Five. It cannot simply take the form of the type of catalogue of affinities with postmodern theory presented there but will have to devote considerable attention to divergences. While it will be shown, once again, that both affinities and divergences are to be found, the balance between these affinities and divergences in will have to be carefully addressed with a view to implications for the evaluation of Lewis's thought in relation to affirmative postmodernism. This, in turn, may have implications for the status of Lewis with regard to the wider phenomenon of the postmodern.

Lewis's spiritual autobiography (1959), as well as the whole range of his religious writings, provides evidence of affinities with, or sympathy for, much within affirmative postmodernism, but there are decided limits to this. Above all, what will be evident, is that it is by virtue of his commitment to 'Mere Christianity', and his role as exponent of that

tradition, that a deep divide exists between Lewis's thought and the representatives of affirmative postmodernism reviewed in this thesis. With regard to the specific case of Steiner's Anthroposophy, Lindskoog (1998) cites Lewis's friend Owen Barfield as stating the opinion that it was Lewis's uncritical aversion to the Occult which was the source of the divide. But in a letter to another Anthroposophist friend (Harwood, 1979), Lewis identifies the issue as relating to the place of God in Christian faith. The question of God does not present the same kind of problem to most of affirmative postmodernism which it does in 'deconstructive' postmodernism. Indeed, the representatives of affirmative postmodernism in general refer freely to the spiritual and the divine without any of the reservations found in Don Cupitt, for example. But, as indicated in a statement by Richard Tarnas cited in the previous chapter, the God rediscovered in Romanticism, and declared in affirmative postmodernism in general, is "not the God of orthodoxy" - of Lewis's 'Mere Christianity'. On Tarnas's account this would, on principle, place Lewis's thought out of court in relation to the postmodern. It is this assessment which we must consider in this chapter. It is true that what will be demonstrated on point after point is precisely the divergence between Christianity and affirmative postmodernism which Tarnas has in mind, but the question which needs to be answered finally is whether it is indeed the case that the Christian Trinitarian theism championed by Lewis is *ipso facto* antithetical to postmodern developments. Despite the evident divergences, it must again be noted that points of contact will also emerge in the comparison of Lewis's thought with various aspects of affirmative postmodernism which follows.

7.3.1 On 'participatory epistemology'

In the previous chapter, the alternative proposed by Tarnas (1996) to the dualistic, subject-object epistemology of modern thought was presented. While most affirmative postmodernisms are strong in their rejection of the modern, mechanical, materialistic worldview, Tarnas is exceptional in the way he goes beyond merely a renewed acknowledgment of the spiritual. Tarnas recognises that a dualistic epistemology is the natural accompaniment of the mechanical model on which modern thought, going back at

least as far as Descartes, has been based. In advocating a participatory epistemology, Tarnas does not lay claim to any originality on his own behalf and cites the contributions of Goethe and Rudolf Steiner in the development of this approach to knowledge. Some of the comments of Lewis relating to knowledge of the world, quoted in Chapter Five with regard to science, must be recalled at this point. Lewis (1978:47) looks there to the development of a consciousness "that the 'natural object' produced by analysis and abstraction is not reality but only a view", paralleling the conclusion of Tarnas (1996:435) that in a postmodern epistemology it is necessary that "the interpretative and constructive nature of human cognition is fully acknowledged". As shown in Chapter Five, in making this point Lewis's thought moves along similar lines to later 'deconstructive' theory, but like Tarnas he goes on to suggest, very specifically, that Goethe and Steiner have something to offer in the development of a positive alternative to modern thought. In particular Lewis echoes the holism of Goethe and Steiner when he looks to the emergence of a science which would explain without explaining away, which would not attend to the parts without attending to the whole and which would, "while studying the *It*", not lose "the *Thou* situation" (Lewis, 1978:47). The implications of Lewis's readiness to refer to Nature as "Thou" will need more discussion in relation to the further aspects of affirmative postmodernism to be dealt with in this chapter. But, at this point, it must be noted that what Lewis, in common with Tarnas, points to is the necessity of the engagement of the whole person in the act of knowing: to respond to the other as 'Thou', in the act of knowing, requires, as a first premise, that the knowing subject must operate as a 'Thou' too. Modern thought, in narrowing down its focus to the activity of supposedly, autonomous, individual rational agents, introduced a tendency to depersonalise the human knower, thereby opening the door to the exploitative approach, not only to other human beings but also the world as a whole, which Lewis (1978) seeks to counteract.

Apart from negative consequences relating to the exploitation of the objectified 'other', the modern understanding of the disembodied, and even disembodied, human epistemological agent is directly opposed to Tarnas's notion of a participatory epistemology. In reasserting

the wholeness of the human knower, the further implication is a wider connectedness not only with others in society but also with the world. This quality of interconnectedness is essential to Tarnas's monism but, to a degree, Lewis (1960) also acknowledges it when he refers to the interlocking processes of the world as a system. A crucial departure from this kind of monism is evident, though, in Lewis's assertion of the disengagement of the human capacity for reason from the system as a whole. This must be returned to in more detail but, at this point, while it must be recognised that this element in Lewis's worldview inevitably places his thought at variance with Tarnas's understanding of a postmodern epistemology, it must be noted that there is still significant commonality between Lewis and Tarnas in their criticism of modern thought. Lewis (1986b:81) concurs with Tarnas's view of the effects of the subject-object dualism of modern thought when he focuses on the enthronement of the autonomous human subject as the fatal step that has ultimately emptied the universe of meaning and value for the modern mind:

"At the outset the universe appears packed with will, intelligence, life and positive qualities; every tree is a nymph and every planet a god. Man himself is akin to the gods. The advance of knowledge gradually empties this rich and genial universe: first of its gods, then of its colours and smells, sounds and tastes, finally of solidity as solidity was originally imagined. As these items are taken from the world, they are transferred to the subjective side of the account: classified as our sensations, thoughts, images or emotions. The Subject becomes gorged, inflated, at the expense of the Object. But the matter does not rest there. The same method which has emptied the world now proceeds to empty ourselves. The masters of the method soon announce that we were just as mistaken (and mistaken in much the same way) when we attributed 'souls' or 'selves' or 'minds' to human organisms, as when we attributed Dryads to the trees."

In the resulting 'Empty Universe', the conclusion is that "The Subject is as empty as the Object" (Lewis, 1986b:83). This, then, is Lewis's diagnosis of the 'malaise of modernity', or at least one aspect of it. Any positive content which is offered to fill it, whatever its nature, might, perhaps, be regarded as constituting an affirmative postmodernism. But what of the autonomous role accorded to reason by Lewis?

A *prima facie* assessment would suggest that Lewis's position on the human capacity for reason must entail the judgement of Snyder (1988) that he allies himself thereby with the attribution of a 'metaphysically privileged' position to the human knower and thus divorces his epistemological view from the principle of participation. But Lewis's opposition to the modern axiom of human epistemological autonomy is unequivocal. The rejection of this element of modern thought is made on different grounds, however, from that of postmodernists such as Snyder or Tarnas. Those grounds are to be found in the Christian tradition. But here one is thrown up against the issue of the relationship of Western Christian thought to modern thought. If, as has been argued elsewhere in this thesis, we must understand modern thought as a development of the Scholasticism of the medieval West, then the frequent criticism by Eastern Christian writers of the influence of Scholasticism on the West (see eg Frank, 1999) must be taken into account in determining what in fact might constitute a valid Christian postmodern epistemology. Another aspect of this issue is evident in Meyendorff (1978;27) who quotes Khomiakov on the transformation, within Western Christianity, of authority into external power so that "knowledge of religious truths [was] cut off from religious life". The continuity between Western medieval and modern thought must again be borne in mind in considering the significance of this statement. Khomiakov comments that the Western Church bestowed "these truths" upon human reason, thus contrasting Western rationalism with an experiential, participatory approach to truth. If the externalisation, to which he refers, is translated as 'objectification' then its relevance to the issue of objective, rationalist epistemology becomes clearer. The issues which are raised here concerning differences between Eastern and Western Christian thought, as well as the role of Scholasticism and Lewis's position in the whole debate, are dealt with elsewhere in this thesis but a key point, relevant to any assessment of Tarnas's view of a participatory epistemology from a traditional Christian perspective, needs to be borne in mind. For Christianity, the 'spiritual' context of a non-objectivist epistemology differs radically from the pantheist oneness with the spirit of nature which Tarnas (1996) appears to have in mind. For this is the further consequence to which Tarnas's epistemological monism leads. Referring to the guidance of the Holy Spirit

operating in the Church as the body of Christ, Meyendorff (1978:35) writes, specifically with reference to history, that "the acknowledgement or denial of its existence is what makes the difference between a Christian and a non-Christian historian.". What Meyendorff states in relation to history has application to knowledge in general. Particularly from the perspective of the Eastern Christian tradition, which he represents, it is false to restrict the role of the Spirit's work to sacred or ecclesiastical matters. In the Kingdom of God the Spirit is given to humanity in its totality, and the goal in the present is to begin to experience and live the reality of that Kingdom. It is in this light that Meyendorff (1978:44) comes to the conclusion: "It is not mere intellectual knowledge. To the question, 'How do I know?' there is no other answer than, 'Come and see'." Here is the foundation statement of a Christian 'participatory epistemology', one which is not peculiarly Eastern, even if the Eastern emphasis in this regard has some times been more emphatic.

In relation to all of this it must be said that Lewis's statements on the issue place him firmly within the orbit of the kind of Christian participatory epistemology whose outline may be observed in Meyendorff's argument. Earlier in this section, attention was given to Lewis's view that the 'I - it' relation, associated with modern subject-object dualism, leads to the kind of distortion of knowledge which he identifies in modern science. This view, expressed in relation to science, is linked by Lewis with the need for the engagement of the whole person in the act of knowing. This is evident elsewhere, where Lewis (1955:140) applies it to the somewhat different perspective of theology:

"You can put this in another way by saying that while in other sciences the instruments you use are things external to your self ... the instrument through which you see God is your whole self."

The apparent acceptance of the modern epistemological dualism in fields other than theology, which might be read in this comment, must be tempered by consideration of Lewis's intended audience, for whom modern science epitomised the unquestionable foundation of truth. In his *Mere Christianity*, Lewis (1955) is focused solely on an apologetic-theological purpose whereas in *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis (1978), in debating

issues of ethics and the nature of science, extends the principle more broadly. It is in this light that we might also extend beyond theology the implication of his further comment, in which Lewis (1955:140) first makes the point that a proper understanding of human beings not only requires a recognition of the holism of each person, but also of the holism of persons in community:

“Consequently, the one really adequate instrument for learning about God is the whole Christian community, waiting for Him together.”

In comparing Lewis’s Christian position here with the epistemology of Tarnas (1996), it is not just a matter of extrapolating from what Lewis says about theology to knowledge in general; we have to note, once again, that Tarnas’s participatory epistemology is intimately tied up with his pantheistic spirituality. With neither Lewis nor Tarnas can we escape the question of God and thus our discussion of epistemology leads naturally on to a discussion of their different spiritualities and cosmologies. However, before proceeding with this discussion, it is necessary to comment further on their different understandings of ‘participation’ in the knowledge process.

The imperative for wholeness and unity, and the ‘participation’ which Tarnas (1996) champions, relates the individual directly to the cosmos. There is no mention of a role for human community. There is thus a certain individualism about what could be compared with the Plotinian quest for the flight ‘from the alone to the Alone’ (Louth, 1981) even though this might be taken as implying the ultimate extinction of the individual. But, if the principle of ‘participation’ in Tarnas is partial, in only applying to the world and not to human community as such, then the significance of ‘participation’ in Lewis’s epistemology cannot be underestimated. There are obviously significant differences between participation in community and in cosmos, and these show plainly in the further development of Lewis’s theistic, Christian thought, and of Tarnas’s pantheistically inclined monism. Amongst these must be counted the relative disengagement of human reason from the interconnectedness of the world, which Lewis (1960) affirms. Two points must be noted in this regard: firstly,

Lewis emphasises that the term 'human reason' is, strictly speaking, inappropriate since it actually amounts to human participation in the divine Reason (Lewis, 1959; 1960); and, leading on from this, the human participation in the divine is not the natural corollary of a pantheistic monism, as in Tarnas, but is the consequence of an act of divine bestowal. Thus Lewis's position on reason and knowledge is set firmly in the theistic framework, with its distinction between Nature and Supernature (Lewis, 1960). That, as we have seen in the previous chapter, is decidedly uncongenial to the authors whom we have taken as representative of affirmative postmodernism, whether it is Cupitt and his categorical atheism, Tarnas with his pantheism, or Griffin or Borg who oppose 'supernatural' theism with their understanding of a 'natural theism' or panentheism. We must therefore move on to focus directly on theological issues.

7.3.2 On divine immanence, panentheism and pantheism

While there is some difference of emphasis amongst the different authors on spiritually-oriented affirmative postmodernism considered in this thesis, all are united in their emphasis on divine immanence. It is significant that in the celebration of postmodern, cosmic spirituality in the millennium issue of *The Ecologist*, the major Christian contributions are from the Hinduphile Griffiths (2000) and the Eastern Orthodox Rossi (2000). With regard to Eastern Orthodox Christianity, Ware (1979) firmly registers its immanentist stress as one of the distinctive features of *The Orthodox Way*. The comment of von Balthasar (1997), that Eastern Christian theology never managed to rid itself entirely of the pantheistic tendencies inherent in the use of neo-Platonic framework of thought, must be noted, though. But, on the other hand, Borg (1994; 1997) complains that modern Christianity (which one may read as post-medieval Western Christianity) has lost the sense of divine immanence which is part of the original Christian tradition. Whatever the justification for Borg's charge, in the actual spiritual practice of much of Western Christianity, and whatever the infiltration of deism within the thought, and even the theology of Western Christianity, the reality of the repudiation of deism by the Western Christianity in general must be recognised (White, 1990). By the same token, the attitude of CS Lewis, as representative of the Great Tradition

of Christianity, must be understood as acknowledging the balance between transcendence and immanence which is essential to the Christian theological heritage. Nevertheless, Lewis (1960), in resisting naturalistic monism, places an emphasis on divine transcendence which would attract the censure of those such as Borg, who see 'supernaturalist theism' as the main enemy of postmodern spirituality and cosmology. Lewis (1960:10) states that,

“What the Naturalist believes is that the ultimate Fact, the thing you can't go behind, is a vast process in space and time which is *going on of its own accord*. Inside that total system every particular event ... happens because some other event has happened; in the long run because the Total event is happening. ... All the things and events are so completely interlocked that no one of them can claim the slightest independence from the 'whole show'.”

What Lewis (1960:12) refers to as Supernaturalism signifies the recognition of “the One Self-existent thing - or the small class of self-existent things” which “Supernaturalists ... call God or the gods” For practical purposes Lewis discounts polytheism since, generally, the gods of polytheistic systems are not strictly supernatural: they are “products of the total system of things and included within it”. Lewis shows that the difference between Naturalism and Supernaturalism is not the same as the distinction between belief and disbelief in God or the spiritual:

“Naturalism, without ceasing to be itself, could admit a certain kind of God. The great interlocking event called Nature might be such as to produce at some stage a great cosmic consciousness, an indwelling 'God' arising from the whole process as human mind arises (according to the Naturalists) from human organisms. A Naturalist would not object to that sort of God. ... What Naturalism cannot accept is the idea of a God who stands outside Nature and made it.”
(Lewis, 1960:12-13)

Despite the protestations of Borg (1997), that his purpose is merely to redress the balance between transcendence and immanence, and without doing violence to the theology of Cobb on which he draws, it seems that Borg's panentheism and his use of Process theology falls within Lewis's definition of Naturalism here. His affinity to that type of feminist theology (eg Hampson, 1990; Ruether, 1992), which declines to see God as an entity apart from the world or Nature, must be taken together with his solidarity with Griffin (1989b), in his

repudiation of 'supernatural theism', as evidence of his actual opposition to the notion of transcendence encapsulated in Lewis's reference to "the idea of a God who stands outside Nature and who made it". Conversely, it must be recognised how profoundly dissonant Lewis's position is in relation not only to that of Borg but also the other representatives of affirmative postmodernism whom we have considered and who share so much in common with him.

While Lewis (1960) perceives commonality in the shared Naturalism of materialistic atheism and the belief in an emergent God, he does not at the same time class them together with pantheism. Later in the same book, however, he does categorise them all as monism (Lewis, 1960; 169), with the distinction that the monist,

"if he starts from God, becomes a Pantheist; there must be nothing that is not God. If he starts from Nature he becomes a Naturalist; there must be nothing that is not Nature."

One perceives in this distinction the possible grounds for the distaste for the label of 'pantheism' of those affirmative postmodernists whom we have studied, for whom Nature is of primary importance. This does not, however, appear to matter to Harvey (1997), who is equally happy for the Neo-paganism which he defends to be designated as panentheism or pantheism, despite its overwhelming Naturalism. In the case of Tarnas (1996) the lack of concern to repudiate the description of pantheism might reflect (as Lewis would argue) a focus on oneness with the divine more than with Nature.

While Lewis (1960:169) comments in his 'Epilogue' that monism "is the type of thought which, under various disguises, has been our adversary throughout this book", earlier in the book he identifies pantheism, specifically, rather than Naturalism, as the opponent of the Christian worldview. Because of the importance of the issue to this thesis, Lewis's comments in this regard are quoted in full here.

"We who defend Christianity find ourselves constantly opposed not by the irreligion of our hearers but by their real religion. Speak about beauty, truth and goodness, or a God who is simply the indwelling principle of these three, speak about a great spiritual force pervading all things, a common pool of generalised spirituality, to which we can all flow, and you will command friendly interest. But the temperature drops as soon as you mention a God who has particular purposes and performs particular actions, who does one thing and not another, a concrete, choosing, commanding, prohibiting God, with a determinate character. People become embarrassed or angry. Such a conception seems to them crude and even irreverent. The popular 'religion' excludes miracles because it excludes the 'living God' of Christianity and believes instead in a kind of God who obviously would not do miracles or indeed anything else. This popular 'religion' may roughly be called Pantheism" (Lewis, 1960:85-86)

In view of Lewis's identification of pantheism as the real opposition to Christianity, it is significant to note that the version of Christianity expounded by Schleiermacher, father of modern liberal theology, is explicitly described as pantheistic by Kung (1995) and by Gadamer (1975). Schleiermacher offered a version of Christianity congenial to the modern mind because it excluded the 'living God' which, to it, appeared to be so crude and primitive. The 'progressive' and 'advanced' status, which is claimed for pantheistic understandings within modernity, is addressed by Lewis as he continues:

"Pantheism certainly is (as its advocates would say) congenial to the modern mind; but the fact that a shoe slips on easily does not prove that it is a new shoe - much less that it will keep your feet dry. Pantheism is congenial to our minds not because it is the final stage in a slow process of enlightenment, but because it is almost as old as we are. It may even be the most primitive of all religions ... It is immemorial in India. The Greeks rose above it only at their peak in the thought of Plato and Aristotle; their successors relapsed into the great pantheistic system of the Stoics. Modern Europe escaped it only while she remained predominantly Christian; with Giordano Bruno and Spinoza it returned. With Hegel it became almost the agreed philosophy of highly educated people, while the more popular pantheism of Wordsworth, Carlyle and Emerson conveyed the same doctrine to those on a slightly lower cultural level. So far from being the final religious refinement, Pantheism is in fact the permanent natural bent of the human mind. ... Platonism and Judaism (and Christianity which has incorporated both) have proved the only things capable of resisting it." (Lewis, 1960:86-87)

Much of Lewis's case is in fact accepted by Tarnas, who seems quite explicitly to see a re-

establishment of pantheism as the point to which the whole history of *The Passion of the Western Mind* (Tarnas, 1996) has led. Lewis's point of the amenability of the modern worldview to pantheism is at odds with the conventional view of the secularisation of modern society and with the agnostic or atheistic rationalism which has been thought of as most characteristically accompanying this trend. His reference to figures in the history of modern philosophy, such as Spinoza and especially Hegel, is instructive in this regard. While some modern introductory texts in philosophy may have attempted to cast their thought in a more 'secular' light, the religious dimension is in fact crucial to these philosophers. It is still more instructive to recall how the materialistic philosophy, which underlay Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection, proved to be no barrier to the emergence of the evolutionist philosophy of progress, and the linking of this to the Life-Force of 'Creative Evolution' by Bergson and others (Lewis, 1955). A vitalistic conception of matter may even be detected in Marx - Zaehner (1959b:407) writes::

"By applying the Hegelian dialectic to matter, Marx and Engels brought matter to life and made it a living thinking thing. [And, quoting Marx] 'The first and most important of the inherent qualities of matter is motion, not only mechanical and mathematical movement, but still more impulse, vital life-spirit, tension, or to use Jakob Boehme's expression, the throes of matter.'"

Zaehner then quotes from Genesis 2:7, on God forming man from the dust of the ground and breathing into him the breath of life so that 'man became a living soul', and concludes that "What the Lord God had done for man, Marx did for matter". It must, of course, be observed that Marx was as inconsistent in his philosophy as Nietzsche was (Robinson, 1999). But, whatever the degree of materialism Marx displayed elsewhere in his work, it is telling that it is not just from Hegel, but also from the mystical, spiritual Boehme, that Marx draws in discussing this unexpected perspective on his historical materialism. It was thus consistent with the Marxian vision, for English Marxists, filling in census forms in the 1920's, to provide the response, 'History', to the question concerning their religion (Reid, 1990).

What, then, is to be made of all this in our attempt to evaluate the position of CS Lewis with regard to affirmative postmodernism? What emerged initially in the discussion of immanence in this subsection was the assertion of the principle of divine immanence as a characteristic feature of affirmative postmodernism, whether pantheistic or panentheistic. But it has also emerged that some or other form of immanent spirituality is not at all alien to the modern worldview, with even Darwinism and Marxism showing at least some tendencies in this direction. One is led to question whether the postmodern break with modernity is as sharp as is claimed, at least in respect of spiritually-oriented affirmative postmodernism. From one perspective, if we accept the anecdotal evidence of Lewis (1960) on the prevalence of pantheism in his experience of modern England, it would seem that the real divide is between modern thought and the Judaeo-Platonic-Christian tradition. In this division, if we follow Lewis, affirmative postmodernism would seem to find itself on the same side as modernity! However, in Tarnas's (1996) treatment of the development of Western thought, a different light is thrown on this question: Tarnas would agree with Lewis that pantheism is the natural, age-old resting place of the human mind. The full import of Tarnas's postmodernism then consists in the break, not merely with the late-comer modernism of the last few centuries, nor even with medieval Scholasticism as the precursor of modern thought. Rather, to Tarnas, the more ancient divide is between the spirituality of the Great Mother and the "supernatural theism" which, as Lewis concurs, arose in Greek and Hebrew thought.

7.3.3 On personality in God

The question of the personal is inextricably linked with the debates around Supernaturalism and Naturalism, theism, pantheism and panentheism, which have been dealt with in the previous subsection. A related issue is the question of gender: Lewis (eg 1979a) champions the traditional Christian and theistic ascription of masculinity to God while Tarnas (1996) identifies recognition of the feminine, in a renewed understanding of God, as a key element in his account of the development of the postmodern. In this subsection the issue of personality in God will be discussed as a bridge between the characteristic postmodern

emphasis on divine immanence and the equally significant emphasis on the divine feminine. In his account of the development of the 'Western Mind' Tarnas refers to Goddess spirituality not only in relation to the postmodern situation but also the pre-Aryan and pre-Hebraic cult of the Great Mother. To Tarnas, the postmodern represents not merely a break from the modern but also from the theistic understanding of a God-world dualism, by which the Graeco-Judaic heritage of the West caused a more fundamental break from the typical worldviews of premodernity. Frankfort et al (1949:237-8) touch on the heart of the ancient worldview, of which Goddess religion was part, when they state that,

"The mainspring of the acts, thoughts, and feelings of early man was the conviction that the divine was immanent in nature, and nature intimately connected with society. ... In the significant moments of his life, early man was confronted not by an inanimate, impersonal nature - not by an 'It' - but by a 'Thou' ... such a relationship involved not only man's intellect but the whole of his being - his feeling and his will, no less than his thought."

As Lewis (1960) notes too, these issues are 'age-old'. But, by virtue of his very engagement with the thought and worldviews of previous ages (see eg Lewis, 1959), he brought strong views to his consideration of issues which, since his death, have taken on renewed cogence in relation to the spirituality of affirmative postmodernism. It is very much the recovery of this sense of relationship with a living-divine world which is the goal of the vision of Tarnas (1996). However, like Rudolf Steiner on whose thought he explicitly draws, Tarnas places great stress on the evolution of consciousness. Thus he does not countenance a simple return or revival of the kind seen in the Neo-pagan postmodernism of Harvey (1997). At the same time, though, Tarnas's understanding of the personal in relation to the divine is much more equivocal than appears at first sight in the seeming personalism of his use of the term 'the Great Mother', and the ascription of the personal 'Thou' which it implies. The question of the evolution of consciousness is highlighted in the review in the previous chapter and it will be significant with regard to the present discussion of issue of the personal, but other aspects of this issue require clarification first.

Lewis (eg 1979d) is particularly attuned to the type of ambivalence, evident in the writing of some protagonists of affirmative postmodernism, in which a stress on the personal in relating to the 'other' as 'Thou', whether Nature or God, appears to go hand in hand with equivocation in relation to the personal. On the other hand those authors who unambiguously declare themselves post-Christian appear to be similarly unambiguous with regard to the divine nature. Thus, in her *Elements of the Goddess*, Matthews (1989) is forthright, despite the personal connotations of the title, in stating that the 'Goddess' does not correspond to the personal God of Christianity. Regardless of the use of the personal pronoun, 'She' is neither personal nor an entity. The same straightforwardness is evident in the views of Daphne Hampson who, despite her theological feminism, refuses to make use of the terms 'Goddess' and 'She' - specifically in order to underline the point that God is not an entity separate from the world:

"Now one does not simply give female names to a male God, or replace a God conceived as male with one conceived as female, but articulates differently and non-anthropomorphically what one means by God. Such a non-anthropomorphic understanding of God, in which God is not conceived as a discrete entity of which a personal pronoun could be used, is I believe the more fundamental revolution." (Hampson, 1990:149-150).

In answering those who, unlike Matthews and Hampson, presume to stand within the Christian tradition but at the same time prevaricate regarding the personal, Lewis is direct in his attack. In this regard, Lewis's (1979d) response to JAT Robinson's article, 'Our image of God must go' (which followed his bestseller, *Honest to God*) is of particular significance in view of the direct acknowledgment by Borg (1994; 1997) of his reliance on Robinson. The discussion of Borg's handling of the personal, in the previous chapter, shows that he too is susceptible to Lewis's criticism of Robinson's treatment of the personal nature of God.:

"Perhaps the real novelty is in the Bishop's doctrine of God. But we can't be certain, for here he is very obscure. He draws a sharp distinction between asking 'Does God exist as a person?' and asking whether ultimate reality is personal. But surely he who says yes to the second question has said yes to the first? Any entity describable

without gross abuse of language as God must be ultimate reality, and if ultimate reality is personal, then God is personal. Does the bishop mean something that is not 'a person' could yet be 'personal'? Even this could be managed if 'not a person' were taken to mean 'a person and more' - as is provided by the doctrine of the Trinity. But the bishop does not mention this."

(Lewis, 1979d:85-86)

In terms of Lewis's comments in the previous subsection, it seems likely that he would diagnose Robinson's problem as being due to the effect of the natural drift towards pantheism: on the one hand Robinson wishes to retain the personal as a quality which is of ultimate value but, on the other, to say that God exists as a person would be to tie himself to a 'supernatural theism' (to use Griffin's term once again) which offends his real religious sensibilities. Lewis's reference to God as an 'entity' in debating Robinson's position is worthy of particular note. This is the very term to which Hampson, for reasons which appear similar to those motivating Robinson and Borg, objects. Lewis here no doubt wishes to hold Robinson to the Christian tradition which he, as bishop, might be presumed to represent: Lewis's use of the term 'entity' takes orthodox Christian theism as given. But, more obviously, Lewis's argument is that a person is an entity and therefore the quality of the personal (which Robinson continues to value) is meaningless if it is not related to some or other entity. Thus Lewis's argument attempts to hold Robinson to the principle that God exists as an entity, on the grounds that, without this, his point that reality is ultimately personal cannot stand. It is not only in the post-Christian authors referred to above, that the tenuousness of the personal is evident: as we saw in the review in the previous chapter, Rosemary Ruether, although still seeking to operate under the auspices of Christianity, comes to the conclusion that, while the 'personal centres of being' of all beings are to be respected, the personal is in reality a transient coming-together of elements whose fate is to undergo dissolution. And while she wishes to address *Gaia* (that is the world, which is also to be identified with God) as 'Thou', we must recognise that the voices of *Gaia* or God are our own voices. Thus the seemingly dialogical, *I-Thou* relationship turns out to be a monologue, and our attribution of the personal to *Gaia* and God is no more than the reflection of our own transient being, cast upon an impersonal universe. To this

observation, though, we must add the qualification that Ruether, differs significantly from the 'empty universe' of modern materialistic thought in regarding consciousness as an inherent quality of the universe as a whole. At this point we must return to enquire further into the relationship of these views to the CS Lewis's status as 'prophet of postmodernism'.

In all of this Lewis appears to be fundamentally at odds with the general tendency of postmodern spirituality in denying the existence of God as an entity separate from the existence of the world. For all the reliance of Griffin (1989b), Ruether (1992) and Borg (1997) on Process theology, in their reluctance to follow Hampson (1990) in her frank abandonment of Christianity, none of them appear to give adequate recognition to the duality of 'absolute-versus-consequent' posited of God in Process thought (Page, 1985). Lewis's treatment of the doctrine of God (Lewis, 1955) is clearly not amenable to the Process theological principle in the first place. But Griffin's endorsement of 'natural theism' over 'supernatural theism' would seem to give overweening emphasis to the consequent, world-involved pole of God such that it would necessarily fall into Lewis's category of Naturalism. Similarly, Lewis's Supernaturalism clearly runs foul of Tarnas's (1996:373) implied condemnation of the "monotheistic patriarch" and "absentee creator" of Christian orthodoxy in his commendation of the Romantic rediscovery of God as a "numinous creative force within nature and within the human spirit". What is implicit in Borg's (1994) treatment of 'the sacred' is made explicit by Tarnas: it is not sufficient to protest, in answer to Tarnas, that in Lewis's thought transcendence is balanced with immanence; Tarnas's understanding of the 'numinous force' within nature and the human spirit cannot admit a God who in any real sense stands outside the universe. This much has in fact already been established in the previous subsection, but what must be especially noted here is that the God described as a 'numinous force' in Tarnas's thought, or the inchoate 'sacred' in Borg's, is not personal. Tarnas (1996) is content to personify this immanent force as 'the Great Mother' while Borg is still prepared to personify 'the sacred' in traditional Christian terms but the personal implications of this language are strictly limited. For a personal God would be an 'entity', separate, in some sense at least, from the

world. More unacceptable still is the orthodox Christian notion, upheld by Lewis, that such an entity should have purposes, separate from those inherent in the world. To speak of a God amongst whose purposes is the creation of the world *ex nihilo*, as in the orthodoxy repudiated by Tarnas, is to put forward a notion profoundly out of harmony with the conceptions of God across the spectrum of affirmative postmodernism reviewed in this thesis. Snyder (in Ruether 1992) expresses more bluntly than Tarnas the postmodern dispute with Christian orthodoxy: what is objectionable is the idea of a God 'off the planet', outside of the system of the universe as a whole - an idea which, in Snyder's view, initiated the problem of modernity, with all its consequent ills of alienation for humanity. Without that as its starting point, modern thought could never have accorded to humanity the 'metaphysically privileged position' which Snyder (1988) identifies as the key to the malaise of modernity. But a God who is an entity, who is not merely an inchoate, numinous quality or force within nature, who stands apart from the world in at least some sense and, above all, who has conscious purposes and thus, in the words of Lewis (1960:85), "does one thing and not another", is a personal God. Just as Lewis (1960:13) notes that Naturalism cannot accept "the idea of a God who stands outside of Nature and made it", so too the affirmative postmodernism, which we have considered in this and the previous chapter, cannot accept a personal God. Can Lewis then be considered, in this regard, the 'prophet of postmodernism - except perhaps in warning against what would rise again, in a different guise, to oppose the Christian worldview from similar ground to the philosophies he addressed (Lewis, 1960) when he first wrote in the nineteen-forties? Or can it be claimed for him that he proclaimed a different positive content, one which could be maintained as a confident, affirmative Christian testimony in the new century after his death? If this might be the case then it is in his affirmation of the personal that the key to this standpoint will be found, uncongenial though it might be to non-Christian postmodernisms, or postmodernisms asserting their Christian but non-orthodox status. The quality of the personal has been identified in this discussion with purposiveness and this is associated, as a matter of course, with consciousness. Therefore the central role accorded to consciousness by Tarnas must be addressed in the course of arguing to a conclusion in this regard.

We have, with regard to Ruether in the previous chapter, already come across the idea of consciousness as an inherent quality in nature, so that even sub-atomic particles possess 'mentality'. But, as we have also seen, Ruether (1992:249) ascribes a pivotal role to humanity's capacity for reflexiveness, so that we are "the place where the universe becomes conscious of itself". Tarnas (1996), drawing from the same sources as Ruether, (eg Teilhard de Chardin), but also from others, particularly Rudolf Steiner, arrives at a very similar interpretation of the evolution of consciousness. The thought of Steiner is of particular interest to this thesis because of the close associations of CS Lewis with followers of Steiner (see Harwood, 1979), and will therefore be dealt with in detail in the following chapter. But for the present purpose it is Tarnas's particular conception of the evolution of consciousness which will lead us on to the discussion of Lewis's thought in relation to the further aspect of divine gender in affirmative postmodernism. In the thought of Tarnas (1996) it is this element of consciousness which provides the link between his participatory epistemology and his spirituality, but all of these are linked together in the understanding of the 'Great Mother' who, as in Ruether's understanding of *Gaia*, is both God and world at the same time. Here, in a somewhat different form, we encounter the notion of a "great cosmic consciousness, an indwelling God arising from the whole [world] process" which has been cited earlier from Lewis (1960:12). In Lewis's discussion we saw that he draws a clear distinction between this kind of emergent God and the decisively supernatural God of orthodox Christian theism. But Tarnas's (1996:373) God of "immanent cosmic process" requires further consideration before being thus dismissed, particularly because of the link, through Steiner's Anthroposophical system, with the thought of Lewis.

In Tarnas's thought God or, rather, the Goddess, is not brought into existence in the process of becoming which she undergoes. Although eclipsed in the West by the masculine-dominated Graeco-Judaic heritage, the 'Great Mother' is present at the beginning as at the end, according to Tarnas. The primordial purposiveness or 'mentality' of the world is an expression of the nature of the Goddess, but the potential of that nature is only brought to full expression through the minds of human beings who are her children. Thus we have

seen, in discussing Tarnas's epistemology, the manner in which he speaks of how "nature brings forth its *own* order through the human mind" (Tarnas, 1996:435). In this we may perceive an answer to Lewis's criticism of JAT Robinson's understanding of how reality may be ultimately personal even though God is not to be spoken of as 'a person': if we follow Tarnas, personality, like mind, may be thought of as potentiality, primordially inherent within nature, but being actualised in the evolution of consciousness - *through humanity*, which is the blossom and crown of nature. In this view, human cognition and personality is an expression of the divine nature, so human beings are not separate from God any more than God is separate from nature. But, while this is clearly a far more sophisticated interpretation than a straightforward monism, of either a naturalistic or pantheistic disposition, faced with the somewhat similar conception of spiritual evolution in Steiner's Anthroposophy, CS Lewis had no hesitation in rejecting it as anthropocentric and in opposition to the Christian view (Harwood, 1979). Tarnas's conception of the divine has, however, brought to our attention a characteristic feature of affirmative postmodernism to which Lewis is even more implacably imposed.

7.3.4 On gender and God

In his response to the Bishop of Woolwich's article, 'Our image of God must go', Lewis (1979d) finds much confusion in the bishop's rejection of images of 'God up there', and of the personal nature of God. He attempts to make sense of the bishop's problems and concludes:

"If I were briefed to defend his position I should say, 'The image of the Earth-Mother gets in something which that of the Sky-Father leaves out. Religions of the Earth-Mother have hitherto been spiritually inferior to those of the Sky-Father, but, perhaps it is time now to re-admit some of their elements.' I shouldn't believe it very strongly but some sort of a case could be made out" (Lewis, 1979d:86).

But if Lewis's prescience did not extend to a serious consideration of a revival of the religion of the Earth-Mother in later affirmative postmodernism, he did at least take it seriously as a factor in the religious development of humanity, as his interest in the old religions of the

Near East and Mediterranean Europe demonstrates (see eg Lewis, 1957; 1959). Perhaps the case, which he acknowledges might be made, would deal with the relative neglect of the divine immanence in Western Christianity to which we have already referred. It might even consider introducing an emphasis on the Motherhood of God of the kind to be found in Anselm of Canterbury (Johnson, 1993) or even in Julian of Norwich (Backhouse & Pipe trs. 1987) - even if this would have to be subject to the theological *caveat* that orthodox Trinitarian theology would understand the Motherhood of God only in relation to creation and not within the relations of the immanent Trinity. Contrary to his alleged misogyny (Lindskoog, 1998), it might be argued, on the basis of his respect for Christian tradition, that Lewis would not have summarily dismissed Anselm's interpretation of Jesus's use of the imagery of the hen and chicks. And, despite his strong views (discussed later in this chapter) on the vital necessity of maintaining the logical priority of masculine imagery in relation to God, there are other grounds for expecting that he would have recognised the validity of the application of feminine imagery to God. Lewis (1963) is frank in his opinion that a purely masculine man or a purely feminine woman would be unendurable. The evidence of his use of the principle of the analogy of being (Lewis, 1955), in which he stresses that every feature of creatures is in some way a reflection of the nature of the Creator, and his interpretation of the Pauline notion of 'headship' (see later in this chapter), suggests that Lewis had no qualms about accepting the attribution to God of femininity or, to meet the criticism of the idea of femininity by feminist theologians (see eg Hampson, 1990), of femaleness. Lewis's evaluation of Julian's *Revelations of Divine Love* provides indirect, but nonetheless strongly suggestive corroboration of this conclusion.

In writing to Bede Griffiths in April 1940 (Lewis, 1988c:346-7) he mentions that he had been reading Julian lately and comments, "A dangerous book, clearly, and I am glad I didn't read it much earlier". He adds, though, that both rejection of the world and love of the creature are also dangerous, and, despite the dangers he perceives in Julian, he adds the comment on these twin dangers, that "One thing in her pleased me immensely", and continues,

“How the good of each is won, and the danger rejected, in her vision of ‘all that is made’ as a little thing like a hazel nut ‘so small I thought it could hardly endure’. Not bad, you see: just very, very small”

Lewis’s discussion of Julian’s vision must be returned to in the discussion of the ‘sacred cosmos’ which follows, but it is his assessment of the dangers and merits of her *Revelations* which is relevant at this point. In the climax of his ‘dream’ of the ultimate destiny of humanity (Lewis, 1972) he quotes from Julian’s *Revelations*, “All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well”, in connection with the universalism of George MacDonald, his guide and mentor. In a letter to Owen Barfield in June 1940 (Lewis, 1988d:352-3) he quotes the same statement and adds,

“This is from Lady Julian of Norwich whom I have been reading lately and who seems, in the fifteenth Century, to have rivalled Thomas Aquinas’ reconciliation of Aristotle and Christianity by nearly reconciling Christianity with Kant”

Here, perhaps, is the major cause of Lewis’s perception of danger in the visions of Julian: the possibility that objective reality would be displaced by according the categories of the human mind (of Julian’s in this case) a Kantian, determinative role in cognition. In passing it should also be noted how this concern of Lewis would further qualify any acceptance on his part of the type of participatory epistemology advocated by Tarnas. But what is of relevance in relation to the immediate issue is Lewis’s lack of any comment on Julian’s emphatic use of the imagery of motherhood in relation to Jesus and God. In analysing his passionate defence of the traditional application of masculine imagery to God (Lewis, 1963; 1979a) care must therefore be taken before accepting the common charges of male prejudice and misogyny made against Lewis (see Lindskoog, 1998). It is in this light that we must now proceed to consider the postmodern re-affirmation of the Earth-Mother, of which Tarnas (1996) is the most powerful apologist. While he is prepared to countenance (even if mildly facetiously) the reintroduction of some elements of Earth-Mother religion, in his discussion of Bishop Robinson’s thoughts on images of God, as we proceed it will be seen that this tolerance on the part of Lewis does not extend as far as the implications of the

understanding of the 'Great Mother' with regard to the 'sacred cosmos' and the archetypal significance of imagery. In this regard, Tarnas's insistence on the centrality to affirmative postmodernism of the recognition of the divine feminine, which is borne out in the review of Steyn (1994), has strong bearing on our assessment of Lewis's postmodern status.

Tarnas's notion, of 'nature bringing forth', cited in the previous subsection, is evocative of the imagery of birth, and this is not merely co-incidental. In one way or another, the assertion of the feminine in relation to the divine nature is stressed not only by Tarnas (1996) and Ruether (1992) but also in the discussion of the postmodern by Griffin (1989b), Steyn (1994), Borg (1994), and Harvey (1997). But, once again, it is at the hands of Tarnas that the most philosophically sophisticated treatment of this characteristic theme of affirmative postmodernism is provided. The imagery of 'Mother Nature', emptied of most of its meaning in conventional use, receives new life in the discussion of Tarnas. The picture of biological life emerging from the womb of nature, is central to Ruether (1992) in her writing on *Gaia* as divine Mother, but Tarnas's interpretation of the birthing idea goes much further in his understanding of the development of consciousness. The exercise of the faculty of reflexive consciousness gives rise to a distance between the human mind and the world on which it reflects, and this is a necessary part of the process by which "the world's truth realises itself within and through the human mind" (Tarnas, 1996:434). But this act of separation, of human nature from the womb of Nature from which it takes its life, entails an alienation which, in the course of Western history, was exacerbated as it came to be entrenched in a dualistic, subject-object mode of cognition. According to Tarnas, at the heart of this development lay the consequences of masculine-oriented theism, of a God who was 'off the planet', which also entailed the assumption by humanity of an epistemological position which aspired to be, like God, independent of the system as a whole. It will be evident, in this brief review, how the monistic spirituality and participatory epistemology of Tarnas are wedded not only with each other but also with the principle of the divine feminine. Against all of this must be set the implacable opposition of Lewis not only to monism but also to the imputation of feminine gender to God, at least when this is seen as

detracting from divine masculinity (Lewis, 1963; 1979a; 1979d). But in addition, as we have already seen, far from human cognition being, to Lewis, the means of nature bringing forth its own order, of the world's truth realising itself, human cognition can only operate by means of its participation in the divine Reason (Lewis, 1959; 1960) of a God who stands, at least in principle, apart from the world. Indeed, in the imagery of Lewis (1960:30), reason enters Nature through human minds, as "something of a different kind from herself" in what is,

"frankly, a picture in which Nature (at any rate on the surface of our own planet) is perforated or pockmarked all over by little orifices ...".

There is more than one issue in this which require further discussion, including what the implications of Lewis's thought here might be for the idea of 'sacred nature' - which will be discussed in the next subsection of this chapter as a further characteristic feature of affirmative postmodernism with which Lewis's thought must be compared. More immediately, though, it should be noted how Lewis attributes feminine gender to Nature. But it is in Nature and not God that Lewis primarily perceives the feminine and, indeed, Lewis has very decided views on gender in relation to God..

Lewis (1979a:91) states that "a child who had been taught to pray to a Mother in Heaven would have a religious life radically different to that of a Christian child". What Lewis has in mind here is not the sense in which Catholic and Orthodox children might be taught to pray to the Mother of God but relates to the nature of God. In this regard the feminist theologian Sallie McFague (1982:160) retorts that this "is indeed the case, and let us imagine that possibility and the changes it would entail". What she has in mind is a patriarchal monotheism and the influence of its oppressive power-relations on religious life and on life in general. But whatever the validity of her case in that regard, it is not related to the point which Lewis is making. This point is that a religion of a divine Mother, and in fact any religion which emphasises immanence to the exclusion or even the diminution of transcendence, will lead to a doctrine of salvation as dissolution. This is demonstrated in

the excerpts quoted from Ruether in the previous chapter, even though she portrays a very biological interpretation of the return to *Gaia* in “the cycle of decomposition and recomposition” Ruether (1992:252). In Tarnas, too, despite his emphasis on the development of consciousness, we have noted previously how the goal of the spirituality of the Great Mother is “dissolution of the ego in ecstatic union with the universe” which is also union with the Great Mother (Tarnas, 1996:427). In the climax of his popularisation of traditional Christian theology, Lewis (1955) comes, in appearances at least, very close to this monistic conception of union with the divine before diverging decisively from it:

"His will must become ours and we are to think His thoughts, to 'have the mind of Christ' as the Bible says. And if Christ is one, and if He is thus to be 'in' us all, shall we not be exactly the same? It certainly sounds like it; but in fact it is not so."

"The more we get what we call 'ourselves' out of the way and let Him take us over, the more truly ourselves we become. There is so much of Him that millions and millions of 'little Christs', all different, will still be too few to express Him fully. ... It is when I turn to Christ, when I give myself up to His Personality, that I first begin to have a real personality of my own."

(Lewis, 1955: 186 & 187)

Between the monistic concept of union with the divine and the Christian, theistic understanding, a gulf is fixed. But how do these differing views on human salvation relate to the question of God and gender. As we have seen, the post-Christian feminist theologian Hampson (1990) believes that, whether God is named Father or Mother, He or She, the effect is to retain the Christian idea of God as an agent and an entity. But in the view of Lewis, and on the showing of the protagonists of the Goddess themselves, at least those whose thought has been reviewed in this thesis, the unqualified ascription of feminine gender to the divine is directly related to the abandonment of the theistic conception of God as an entity. And, furthermore, the denial of entity, and hence personality to God, corresponds with a denial of the ultimate reality of human personality - presumably this must be the significance of references to dissolution of the ego. All this is implied in Lewis's statement on the nature of the religious life of a child taught to pray to 'Our Mother': in Lewis's view, the divine Mother will in the end always be Gaia, Great Mother

Nature, not a feminine version of the Christian God, despite the opinion expressed by Hampson.

The Great Mother cannot be the Christian God of Julian of Norwich or of Anselm of Canterbury who, at least in relation to creation, incorporates both motherhood and fatherhood, femininity and masculinity. She cannot be the God Who, though 'Beyond Personality', (Lewis, 1955) is yet the guarantor of the personal and the interpersonal. Furthermore, the God of the Judaeo-Christian tradition is the guarantor of more than the personal. He is also the guardian of morality, for as Lewis (1955) points out, a religion based on Nature has no grounds for rising to the level of morality, for she is indiscriminating in offering equally the instinct of mother-love and the way of life of parasitism as her manifestations. Thus Butterfield (1957) underlines the oft-repeated distinction between the Hebrew religion of the righteous Yahweh and the Nature-religions of the Canaanites, amoral with regard to sacred prostitution as well as to the sacrifice of the firstborn. It is significant that Matthews (1989) is prepared to entertain the idea of sacred prostitution as part of the religion of the Goddess. This would, perhaps, be taken by Lewis as merely one indication of the outworking of the principle of non-duality in terms of which other affirmative postmodern authors, such as the feminist theologian Sallie McFague (1987) in her postmodern phase, and the advocate of Native American spirituality, FD Peat (1996), look not merely to the dissolution of the matter-spirit body-mind and feminine-masculine polarities but also to that of the distinction between good and evil. For though Lewis (1972) firmly upholds the Augustinian doctrine of the non-substantiality of evil, he equally strongly repudiates William Blake's notion of 'the marriage of heaven and hell' in his *Great Divorce* (of heaven and hell). Contrary to what might be said by his feminist critics, such as McFague (1982; 1987) and Johnson (1993), it is not the case at all that Lewis identifies good with archetypal masculinity and evil with archetypal femininity but rather that, in his view, male and female are the "live and awful shadows of realities utterly beyond our control and largely beyond our direct knowledge" (Lewis, 1979a). Though we may think we deal with them it is they which are dealing with us "as we shall soon learn if we meddle".

To play fast and loose with images of male and female is, according to Lewis (1979a:91):

"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 commonsense is here prepared to admit ...".

In citing Lewis on the nature of religious imagery, as the reflection of 'live and awful shadows' of facts beyond mundane experience, we have touched on the question of archetypal realities to which our consideration of the final issue in this review of spiritually-oriented postmodernism, that of the sacred cosmos, will lead.

In attempting to guard the significance of masculine and feminine imagery, Lewis may give offence - indeed we reiterate later in this chapter that his ideas on the importance of gender cause discomfort to some of his own supporters. But, as we have seen in his comment on the difference between a Christian child and a child brought up to pray to a divine Mother, Lewis was frank in stating that there are different outcomes to the spirituality of the Great Mother and the religion of the God of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, whom Tarnas (1996:373) disparages as a "juridical monotheistic patriarch" who stands as an "absentee creator" in relation to the world. While Tarnas's criticism may be justified by the actual beliefs and attitudes of many modern Christians, the case which Lewis presents for the 'Mere' Christian tradition as a whole, cannot be so easily dismissed. But if that makes Lewis an effective apologist and exponent of Christian tradition does it not, by the same token, disqualify him as prophet of postmodernism, at least in respect of the affirmative postmodernism which we have reviewed in this thesis? This is the question which has been asked repeatedly as we have noted the divergences between Lewis's thought and spiritually-oriented postmodernism. In proceeding to review Lewis's thought on the issue of the 'sacred cosmos' the divergences already noted will again become apparent but, as we consider the related question of the archetypal character of reality, at least some common ground may emerge.

7.3.5 On the 'sacred cosmos' and the 'sacramental universe'

In his defence of Supernaturalism against monism, Lewis (1960), as we have seen, treats Naturalism and pantheism as two variants of the same phenomenon. According to Lewis (1960:123) the Nature-religions, "when brought face to face with the facts of Nature ... simply re-affirm them, give them (just as they stand) a transcendent prestige" and,

"sanctify our agricultural concerns and indeed our whole biological life. We really get drunk in the worship of Dionysus and lie with real women in the temple of the fertility goddess".

On the other hand, the "anti-Natural or pessimistic religions, which are more civilised and sensitive," negate the facts of Nature, and

"tell us that Nature is evil and illusory, that there is an escape from this incessant change, this furnace of striving and desire" (Lewis, 1960:123).

Amongst the latter Lewis includes the prime example of "higher Hinduism", re-emphasising the point (Lewis, 1955) that Hinduism rises to philosophical heights while still retaining within itself the earthiness of Nature-religion. Lewis makes the same claim for Christianity but draws a contrast between the Christian incorporation of the positive values of ancient paganism with the manner in which village paganism continues to co-exist side-by-side with lofty philosophy in Hinduism (Lewis, 1987c). Nevertheless, with regard to the sacredness of Nature or the cosmos, the world-affirming and world-rejecting elements continue to co-exist within Hinduism. Thus, in view of the strong affinities which his friend, Bede Griffiths, developed with Hinduism, it is interesting to note Lewis's positive response to a book of Griffiths:

"Much that you said about the sacraments was v. illuminating. One really felt how Paganism does not merely survive but first becomes really itself in the v. heart of Christianity."(Lewis, 1988e:441)

Lewis regards as essential the retention of the positive appreciation of Nature and matter, represented in the sacraments, but in a later letter he chides Griffiths for extending positive

appreciation beyond its legitimate limits:

“About Nature - you are apparently meeting, and at an unusually late hour, the difficulty which I met in adolescence and which was for years my stock argument against Theism. Romantic Pantheism has in this matter led us all up the garden path. It has taught us to regard Nature as divine. But she is a creature, and surely a creature lower than ourselves. And a fallen creature - not an evil creature but a good creature corrupted, retaining many beauties but all tainted ... The Devil cd *make* nothing but has *infected* everything. I have always gone as near dualism as Christianity allows - and the NT allows one to go v. near.”

(Lewis, 1988f:500-1)

Thus, to Lewis, Nature is not divine Mother but sister-creature. The immanent ‘sacred’, of divinity inherent in Nature, for example in Borg (1994), is not something which Lewis’s thought would admit, even though he readily speculated on an inherent spiritual quality in Nature (Lewis, 1945). But such a ‘natural spirituality’ would quite evidently, from his portrayal of it, be as separate from the divine order and the order of grace as the rest of Nature. It is instructive to reflect again on the articles on ‘sacred cosmology’ in the millennium issue of *The Ecologist*: amongst the contributions to which are those from the Christian authors, Griffiths and Rossi. As pointed out in the previous chapter, Griffiths’s Hindu affinities make him not entirely representative of the Christian tradition, and the Eastern Orthodoxy of Rossi, calls to mind the criticism of von Balthasar (1997) of the failure of the Christian East to achieve adequately the separation of Nature and grace, world and God. With regard to the sacredness of the cosmos, the Catholic conception of grace as something imparted, or added to created nature (Catholic Catechism, 1994), must be contrasted with the Eastern Christian understanding of uncreated grace as divine energies, ‘rays of divinity’, pervading creation Lossky (1976). To this degree, despite the aversion of Lewis to Scholasticism which Griffiths (1979) describes, Lewis is firmly on the side of Thomism and against ‘sacred Nature’. (This point will be taken up and developed in detail in the following chapter.) This serves to underline the conclusions reached regarding Lewis’s position in the discussion of divine immanence - that the views of Lewis must be regarded as incompatible with the general run of affirmative postmodernism. But to deny divinity to the creature is not to deny that the creature may reflect something of the divine

nature (see Lewis, 1955, Louth, 1981). And what Lewis was prepared to accord to species of creatures within the world may be applied to the creation as a whole. This brings us to a consideration of Lewis's thought in relation to the understanding of the 'sacramental universe' which was reviewed in relation to the work of Sallie McFague in the previous chapter.

We have noted earlier that, in contrasting the 'Protestant sensibility' of 'Enlightenment' modernism with the 'Catholic sensibility', which retains a view of the universe going back beyond modernity to the Middle Ages, McFague (1982:1) states that "we do not live in a sacramental universe". She argues, further, that the symbolic way of thought, "which sees multilayered realities, with the literal level suggestive of meanings beyond itself" (McFague, 1982:5), is no longer valid. But this kind of worldview, in which higher realities are archetypally related to the aspects of ordinary experience, is precisely that upheld by Lewis, for example in his discussion of sex and marriage:

"It is all contained in Christ's saying that two shall be 'one flesh'. He says nothing about two 'who married for love': the mere fact of marriage *at all* - however it comes about - sets up the 'one flesh'. There is a terrible comment on this in 1 Cor. VI. 16; 'he that is joined to a harlot is one flesh'. You see? Apparently, if Christianity is true, the mere fact of sexual intercourse sets up between human beings a relation which has, so to speak, transcendental repercussions - some eternal relation is established whether they like it or not. This sounds very odd, but is it? After all, if there *is* an eternal world and if our world is its manifestation, then you would expect bits of it to 'stick through' into ours. We are like children pulling the levers of a vast machine of which *most* is concealed. We see a few little wheels that buzz round on *this* side when we start it up - but what glorious or frightful processes we are initiating *in there*, we don't know. That is why it is so important to do what we're told. (Cf. - what does the Holy Communion imply about the real significance of *eating*?)"

(Lewis, 1988g:349):

If we do not allow ourselves to be distracted by the somewhat incongruous use of the mechanical image - one which, nevertheless, is effective in getting the point across - what we will recognise here is exactly the symbolic and sacramental universe which McFague (1982) proclaims to be dead. But it is decidedly not a neo-conservative literalism, of the

kind attacked by McFague, which causes Lewis to hang on to the forms of a worldview whose spirit is departed. Lewis (1955) not only presents this view of the sacramental universe as a live option (in what we must remember was originally a series of radio talks directed at a general audience) but makes use of it as an important element in his apologetics. For example, in his explanation of how the uncreated life in Christ is communicated to human beings, Lewis (1955:152) begins by directly rejecting the atomistic ('discontinuous' in McFague's terms) nature of the modern worldview:

"If you could see humanity spread out in time, as God sees it, it would not look like a lot of separate things dotted about. It would look like one single growing thing - rather like a very complicated tree. Every individual would appear connected with every other. And not only that. Individuals are not really separate from God any more than from one another."

This principle of interconnectedness which Lewis propounds here is one whose ramifications extend through time also:

"It is as if something which is always affecting the whole human mass begins, at one point to affect the whole human mass in a new way. From that point the effect spreads through all mankind. It makes a difference to people who lived before Christ as well as to people who lived after Him. It makes a difference to people who have never heard of Him. It is like dropping into a glass of water one drop of something which gives a new taste or a new colour to the whole lot"

The principle of interconnectedness, which is such a constant emphasis in the literature of affirmative postmodern authors, is extended by Lewis beyond the range of their normal, spatially-based conceptualisation. Lewis's understanding of interconnectedness uses imagery more radical than theirs in the holism it attributes to the whole space-time complex of the universe. All this arises not out of an attempt on Lewis's part to develop a new worldview for a new age which is the project, in their different ways, of Griffin's 'constructive postmodernism' (1988), Rosemary Ruether's 'ecofeminist theology' (1992) and Tarnas's spirituality of the Great Mother (1996). Lewis's objective is simply that which he proclaims throughout his apologetic work: to represent (in the modern age) the substance of 'mere Christianity'. To Lewis, the symbolic, interconnected, sacramental universe is

central to 'mere Christianity'. Wain (1979) views Lewis's whole defence of the worldview of 'Old Western Man' as a rearguard action fought by Lewis on behalf of an army which had long since marched away. Wain's opinion parallels the similar sentiment of McFague (1982) on the status of the mediievally originated 'Catholic sensibility' in an age confident in the heritage of the 'Enlightenment'. But, as we have seen, within five years McFague had gone back on her statement that "we cannot return to the time of the sacramental universe" (McFague, 1982:2), in order to proclaim a 'new' postmodern worldview portraying a "considerably more complex picture than the old view, with a hierarchy of levels of organisation" (1987:10) in which the different levels are united "by symbiotic mutual interdependencies" (1987:11). If we follow the development of McFague's thought, what would have been judged as the stubborn medieval traditionalism of Lewis, a few years earlier, would now have to be taken as evidence for a 'postmodernism before its time' on Lewis's part. Lewis's position in fact displays, up to a point, a remarkable concordance with that of Tarnas (1996), with both taking from Jung the notion of the importance of archetypes (see eg Lewis, 1955), but giving it a deeper, cosmological significance than that which Jung's Kantianism allowed.

7.3.6 On archetypal reality and the feminine

In reading Tarnas and Lewis it is clear that both accept the notion of the 'sacramental' or symbolic universe delineated by Sallie McFague in her postmodern phase. And, like McFague, the feminist theologian, both see in the question of gender a prime instance of the importance of participation in archetypal symbolism. Although Tarnas is in accord with Lewis on the spiritual and archetypal nature of higher realities which play themselves out in human life, and although they agree on the archetypal significance of masculinity and femininity, they diverge fundamentally on what that significance means in practice. For both, the significance of gender extends far beyond the limited role ascribed to it in modern thought but with very different outcomes. Tarnas is the champion not only of the Great Mother but also of feminism, which he sees as an important part of the process of spiritual evolution. With regard to Lewis, it is interesting, to recall that Kathryn Lindskoog, a fervent

disciple of Lewis, felt so discomforted by some of Lewis's views on gender that, rather than accepting them as his, she preferred to accuse Walter Hooper, his editor, of falsifying parts of Lewis's work (Lindskoog, 1994). But it is not only women who find Lewis's views uncomfortable: firmly heterosexual males might find themselves repelled by the speculation of Lewis, in one of his works of fantasy, that male and female are the earthly, biological expressions of only two in a series of seven genders on the angelic level of existence (Lewis, 1943). While Lewis himself might not have defended this part of his imaginative writing as a serious proposition, it does highlight his conviction that gender, as manifested in the biological phenomenon of sexuality, as well as in the psychological phenomenon of masculinity and femininity, is an archetypal reality which cannot be understood within the limits of its biological or psychological expression. Nor, in Lewis's understanding, is it to be comprehended purely in terms of social reality. It is here that we meet what for Lewis is the problem of the imposition on one level (the archetypal) of principles appropriate to another level (the socio-political) but what for his feminist critics is a manifestation of his reactionary frame of mind.

An illustration of the differentiation between the archetypal and the social implications of gender is found in Lewis when he refers to the Pauline understanding of 'headship', applied in relation to man and woman in 1st Corinthians 11:13. In a letter to a former woman student with feminist leanings (Lewis 1988g:347-351), it is evident from his use of the image that he himself accepts it, but he is careful to differentiate that use from a view of male domination which he elsewhere (Lewis, 1986a) opposes strongly:

“ The Headship doctrine is that of Christianity [but] I take it to be chiefly about man *as* man and woman *as* woman, and therefore about husbands and wives, since it is only in marriage that they lawfully meet *as* epitomes of their sex. Notice that in 1 Cor. XI just after the bit about the man being the head, St Paul goes on to add the baffling reservation (v. 11) that the sexes ‘in the Lord’ don’t have any separate existence. I have no idea what this means: but I take it it must imply that the existence of a man or a woman is not exhausted by the fact of being male or female, but that they exist in many other modes.”

To this Lewis adds that “St Paul is not a system maker” so that, although he would have accepted “that a man ought to honour and obey his mother”, thus placing man in that mode in subordination to woman, “he doesn’t stop and put that in” in referring to marriage. Elsewhere, Lewis makes the same point but, although allowing the possibility of sexual prejudice on the part of St Paul, still seeks to distinguish archetypal roles of men and women from other, political and academic, roles:

"We may soften this if we like by saying that he means only man *qua* man and woman *qua* woman and that an equality of the sexes as citizens or intellectual beings is not therefore absolutely repugnant to his thought: indeed, that he himself tells us that in another respect, that is 'in the Lord', the sexes cannot be thus separated."
(Lewis, 1981a:19)

Lewis continues with the discussion of the concept of headship and concludes that we have

"a Pauline picture of this whole series of Head relations running from God [through Christ and man] to woman if we picture each term as the 'image and glory' of the preceding term. And I suppose that of which one is the image and glory is that which one glorifies by copying and imitating. Let me once again insist that I am not trying to twist St Paul's metaphors into a logical system. I know well that whatever picture he is building up, he himself will be the first to throw aside when it has served its purpose and to adopt some quite different picture when some new aspect of the truth presents itself to his mind. But I want to see clearly the sort of picture implied in this passage - to get it clear however temporary its use or partial its application. And it seems to me a quite clear picture; we are to think of some original divine virtue passing downwards from rung to rung of a hierarchical ladder ...".

Once again, Lewis immediately distances himself from the obvious interpretation that the hierarchy here is one relating to inherent nature or to social status. He no more wishes, on the basis of this passage, to suggest that women are somehow inferior to men in nature than that the second Person of the Trinity is inferior to the first Person - something which his traditional Christian orthodoxy excludes *a priori*. Instead Lewis is concerned here with functional relations, what might be referred to also as situational relations except that, to Lewis, the differing 'modes of existence' of man and woman are enduring realities even though they may or may not be manifested in particular situations. And although he refuses to tie himself to the Pauline use of the imagery as an absolute, for Lewis the thought of Paul

on this matter nevertheless points to the manner in which archetypal realities at one level (in this case the divine level) are reflected at another level (the human). Having stressed the functional nature of Lewis's understanding of archetypal realities, we must note that it is not the case that Lewis excludes any and all inherent differences in status. We have seen previously in his writing to Bede Griffiths that he accorded humanity a higher status than the rest of Nature on account of its participation in divine Reason. This too, it must be noted, is an instance of an archetypal relationship between different levels in a multilayered symbolic-sacramental universe of the kind which McFague (1982) initially sought to discount. Such archetypal realities are fundamental to the worldview of Lewis even if, in other respects, they relate to function and situation or, in Lewis's terms, various 'modes of being'.

It is on this basis that Lewis (1979a) argues against 'priestesses in the Church' where, he states (in a passage, partly quoted earlier),

"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."

(Lewis, 1979a:93-94)

Lewis's argument, preceding this conclusion, makes the point that advocates of the admission of women to Christian priesthood imply thereby that sex is superficial and irrelevant to the spiritual life, but that in doing so they are taking the legal fiction (necessary in Lewis's view) of equality in the modern state and absolutising it. The critics of tradition, Lewis implies, rely on the canons of rationalism to judge the suprarational. It is interesting to note that most Protestant Churches have not faced the same dilemma with regard to the ordination of women which Lewis (1979a) deals with. The fact that Protestantism generally accommodated itself more wholeheartedly to modernity (Hargreaves, 1994) is highlighted in the way that McFague (1982), in her modernist phase, contrasts the 'Protestant' and 'Catholic' sensibilities with regard to their amenability to the 'symbolic universe'. Thus,

if we take McFague's shift from the modern to the postmodern as a model, the role accorded to symbolism by Lewis (eg 1979a:92) might be taken as evidence of his openness to the postmodern:

“One of the ends for which sex was created was to symbolise to us the hidden things of God. One of the functions of marriage is to express the nature of the union between Christ and the church. ... The Church claims to be the bearer of a revelation. If that claim is false then we want not to make priestesses but to abolish priests. If it is true then we would expect to find in the Church an element which ... [is] ... opaque to our reason though not contrary to it - as the facts of sex and sense on the natural level are opaque. ... If we abandon that, if we retain only what can be justified by standards of prudence and convenience at the bar of enlightened commonsense, then we exchange revelation for that old wraith Natural Religion.”

Natural Religion, we must recall, accompanied the 'Enlightenment' (White, 1990), but is Lewis's rejection of this manifestation of modernity postmodern or merely anti-modern? He himself might well have seen in it simply another instance of his resistance to 'progress', described in Chapter One. But a comparison with the affirmative postmodernism of Richard Tarnas throws more light on the issue than was available to Lewis at the time.

The above exposition of Lewis's views on the archetypal reality of gender, despite the provisos which he offers, may be regarded as fanciful speculation or as ethically objectionable by those who read them. It is not the purpose of this thesis to defend Lewis's position on counts such as these but, rather, it is to establish the degree to which he may be regarded as postmodern. In this regard, despite the differences in their application of the archetypal principle, Lewis must be regarded in the same light as Richard Tarnas; and, for Tarnas, archetypal reality is a crucial element in his affirmative postmodernism. But, in Tarnas's postmodern vision for humanity, it differs from the understanding of archetypal reality in Lewis by being linked to images of separation from the womb and a corresponding longing for reconnection with the origin and ground of being. For him these images of birth and motherhood express the relationship which emergent human consciousness bears to Nature from which it has arisen. But this is not to be understood as a merely material Nature and a merely biological process of evolution. For Nature, from which human

consciousness emerges, is a living, organic system not the mechanical system of modern materialism. And her life is not merely the biological life, reducible to physico-chemical processes, described by materialistic science. To Tarnas life and consciousness are manifestations of the divine Mother, immanent as numinous potentiality in all her extent. To Tarnas the postmodern developments represent an "epochal shift":

"... reconciliation between the two great polarities, a union of opposites: a *hieros gamos* (sacred marriage) between the long-dominant but now alienated masculine and the long-suppressed but now ascending feminine. ... *For the deepest passion of the Western mind has been to reunite with the ground of its own being.*"
(Tarnas: 1996:443)

In his italicised conclusion Tarnas points to the imperative exerted within human life by archetypal reality. Here, too, we are presented with male and female "not merely as facts of nature but as the live and awful shadows" of realities beyond the ken of the commonsense rationalism of modernity. The content of the vision may differ from that of Lewis but the outline is the same. The implications for human destiny are, however, very different.

7.4 Conclusion: affirmative postmodernism and CS Lewis

The discussion of archetypal realities, as the final feature in our comparison of the thought of CS Lewis with affirmative postmodernism, leads us on to broader issues of human destiny which are themselves linked with differences in the understanding of God which are fundamental to the divide between Lewis and the advocates of affirmative postmodernism whom we have considered in this thesis. Of these, Tarnas has a particularly positive appreciation for the role of Christianity in the development of Western thought but, in his scheme, its role is as a necessary antithesis, opposing the original Neolithic, Earth-Mother spirituality with not only a masculine deity but also an associated dualistic mode of cognition. But the dominance of the masculine, in the classical, medieval and modern phases of the development of the Western mind, has now come to its end, as a new postmodern synthesis emerges. And in order

"to achieve this reintegration of the repressed feminine, the masculine must undergo a sacrifice, an ego-death. The Western mind must be willing to open itself to a reality the nature of which could shatter its most established beliefs about itself and about the world" (Tarnas, 1996:444).

Thus, to Richard Tarnas, the most articulate and profound protagonist of a spiritually-oriented postmodernism, the dualism of the Christian tradition, having served a catalytic purpose in raising the evolution of consciousness within an ultimately monistic system to new heights, is irredeemably anachronistic in a postmodern era. It may or may not turn out to be the case that the spirituality of Mother-Goddess monism, which is basic to Tarnas's synthesis, will come to occupy a place of prominence in the emerging postmodern society of the new millennium. The signs of its fresh Spring, which Tarnas identifies, may be ephemeral and fade away. But whatever its success or failure as a social phenomenon, at the religious and theological levels the challenge which Tarnas presents to the Christian tradition which Lewis represents is clear. What Lewis perceives is that the "ego-death" of the masculine and the shattering of "the most established beliefs" of the 'Western Mind', which he recognises as much as Tarnas as being present in a potential revival of the spirituality of the Great Mother (Lewis, 1960; 1979a; 1979d), represent also the end of Christianity, at least in the form defended by Lewis. And, although Tarnas claims to depict a resolution of masculine with feminine elements, it seems that what he has in mind amounts more to the triumph of the religion of the Earth-Mother over that of the Sky-Father. If it had to occur in the way which Tarnas sees, it would mean also the final death of the God whose existence is independent of his creation and who, in Lewis's words, "does one thing and not another" (1960:86). Lewis would identify Tarnas's 'Great Mother' as the age-old God of pantheism, whose nature is not to do but simply to be - to be the ground of all existence.

In a pantheistic system, as we have noted, dissolution of the self must be the inevitable fate of human beings as they achieve reunion with the ground of their existence. But 'ego-death' and consequent union with the divine are as essential to Lewis as to Tarnas although the content which they have within his framework of Christian theism must always differ from

that which they have within the type of monistic system found not only in Tarnas's spirituality of the Great Mother, but also in the naturalism of Harvey's Neo-paganism, in Ruether's 'eco-feminist spirituality of earth-healing', and in the opposition of Griffin and Borg to 'supernatural theism' in general. None of these postmodern writers, whether viewing themselves as still Christian or not, can countenance the notion of a God who is more than the indwelling presence which their postmodern spirituality affirms, who though immanent also stands outside of the universe as its Creator. Lewis's liking for the vision in Julian of Norwich, of 'everything which is made' as a 'little thing' like a hazel nut, graphically illustrates what is at issue between what Lewis (1955) names as the rival conceptions of God. In the traditional Christian understanding, encapsulated in Julian's vision, the world is, as we have noted from Lewis, not bad but just 'very, very small'. For Lewis, as for Julian, this small thing, like a hazelnut in the palm of the hand, cannot set the limits within which God is contained - the numinous divine 'sacred' of Borg's postmodern spirituality is too contained. So too is the God of "mysticism, pantheism, and immanent cosmic process, preferred by Tarnas (1996:373). But the 'God of orthodoxy', of CS Lewis, is not the absentee-creator, nor the juridical patriarch described by Tarnas. In Julian's *Revelations of Divine Love*, this God may even be addressed as Mother, no less than in the case of the Goddess of postmodern spirituality, although without thereby obscuring the divine Fatherhood, or excluding the possibility of experiencing God in the juridical mode testified to as much by Jesus as by the great prophets of the Old Testament. Thus the divine Presence of the God of Julian, and of CS Lewis, is not limited to the immanent, indwelling of the 'ground of being' which is characteristic of the spirituality of Tarnas's Great Mother. As Payne (1988:161) says of Lewis in *Real Presence*, her account of his worldview,

"His mysticism consists of the knowledge of an indwelling Christ and the practice of the Presence of God within and without."

Whatever the historical justification for Tarnas linking the 'God of orthodoxy' and deism in the same phrase, the divine Real Presence affirmed by Lewis is not limited within the parameters of either deism on the one side or monism on the other. For Lewis it is this God,

really Present throughout his creation, but also distinct from it and not to be identified with it, who grants to human beings a real though contingent distinctiveness also. That distinctiveness is expressed in their exercise of the faculty of reason as well as in the individuality of personhood, both of which are strongly defended by Lewis. And both are, for Lewis, inextricably tied to, and dependent on, the reality of the 'living God'. In the tradition defended by Lewis, that God is not mere immanent numinous presence - to stand in the divine Presence is to stand in a Personal Presence of One who "has particular purposes and performs particular actions, who does one thing and not another" (Lewis, 1960:85-86).

It is the Personal or, rather, Trans-personal Trinitarian God (Lewis, 1955) who is the guarantor not only of the human capacity for reason, but also of human personality which, as we have seen, affirmative postmodernists such as Borg are reluctant to relinquish, even though the death of the 'God of orthodoxy', which they acclaim, spells the death of human personality, as much as it does the deconstruction of reason and the death of truth in the traditional sense (Snyder, 1988). As Lewis (1960:86) states, the 'supernatural theism' of orthodox Christianity is not acceptable to monists of any background (and this must include the advocates of affirmative postmodernism): "Such a conception seems to them crude and even irreverent". Is it then possible for Lewis, the apologist of Christian orthodoxy, to be referred to as 'prophet of postmodernism'? The answer must be 'certainly not' if it means that he heralded its coming, but perhaps 'yes' in the sense that he recognises it as an enduring attraction to the human mind (Lewis, 1960) and warns against its return. But can this 'Christian Worldview of CS Lewis as Incarnational Reality' (the subtitle of Payne's *Real Presence*), stand in an era in which the modern worldview is said by many to have fallen? - especially when modern thought is recognised as a development of the medieval Christian thought to which Lewis (1990a) himself acknowledges looking back to as source? A fuller response to this question, partly answered in Chapter Five, lies in a review of the development of Christian thought, one that will be attempted as part of the next the next chapter.

CHAPTER EIGHT

ALTERNATIVE MODES OF BEING POSTMODERN?:

CS LEWIS AND RUDOLF STEINER

8.1 Introduction: Christianity, Anthroposophy and affirmative postmodernism

In the discussion of Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophy in the preceding chapters of this thesis, it has been suggested that it constitutes a particular example of the development of affirmative postmodernism, even if not a typical one. But Anthroposophy is worthy of special attention in this thesis by virtue of the nature of its links, on one side, with CS Lewis and, on the other, with Richard Tarnas. The reliance of this thesis on the thought of Tarnas has been occasioned by the range and the profundity of his work in tracing and analysing the development of modern and postmodern thought in his *Passion of the Western Mind* (Tarnas, 1996). In the course of this he presents a schema within which two outcomes of that development are discussed together in an integrated account: firstly the postmodern *impasse*, culminating out of the critical tradition within modern thought and the nihilistic onslaught against it; and secondly the emergence of positive options, in spiritually-oriented 'affirmative postmodernism'. What is particularly important with regard to the work of Tarnas is that he goes beyond most other advocates of an affirmative postmodernism in providing a theoretical account which complements that of 'deconstructive' postmodernism. While something similar in intention is offered in the 'Constructive Postmodernism' series of David Ray Griffin, Tarnas surpasses Griffin in the sophistication of his thought. Even though the contributions which Griffin authors and edits, range widely into environmental, social and political issues, the particular contribution of Tarnas, as has been shown, is to be found in his provision of an alternative epistemological basis to that which is crucially implicated in the collapse of modern thought. Tarnas, however, makes no claim to originality and relies heavily on Goethe and Rudolf Steiner in developing his epistemology.

This participatory epistemology is the vital link between the collapse of modern thought and the positive content of an affirmative postmodernism, which is the climax of his account of the development of Western thought. In the previous chapter we have noted some affinities, but more in the way of divergences, between Lewis's position and the affirmative type of postmodernism, of which Tamas is one particular advocate. The characteristic features of this affirmative postmodernism, such as a monistic worldview, and an exclusive or overwhelming emphasis on the immanence of the divine, would suggest that Lewis's thought is incompatible with this kind of postmodernism. But it must again be asked, as it has been previously in relation to 'deconstructive' postmodernism, by what right are these or any other features set up as the exclusive standard of the postmodern? Is it not possible for the thought of CS Lewis to be postmodern in a different kind of affirmative mode from that of affirmative postmodernism in general? It is at this point that Steiner's Anthroposophy offers a fruitful line of enquiry in pursuing the research question of this thesis.

The reliance which Tamas places on Steiner, in developing the epistemological basis of his own affirmative postmodern position, has been referred to already, and the postmodern associations of Anthroposophy are further attested by Steyn (1994). Although Lewis is forthright in pointing out the distance between his own orthodox Christian position and Steiner's system of Anthroposophy (Lewis, 1959), there are nonetheless other aspects to the question of Lewis's relation to the thought of Steiner. Amongst these are his close, continuing friendships with a number of followers of Steiner, the influence of at least one of these friends, Owen Barfield, on his own philosophical and religious development (Lewis, 1959), and the ongoing engagement with issues pertaining to Steiner's system which these relationships occasioned (Harwood, 1979). As we will see, Lewis's relation to Anthroposophy is of particular interest, not only because Tamas draws on Steiner in the development of his postmodernism, but, because it can be argued that Steiner, in his own right, developed a postmodern position, at roughly the same time as the postmodernism which Kung (1995) identifies in Karl Barth. Anthroposophy is in many respects far removed from Barth's neo-Reformed Christianity, and offers a very different mode of being

postmodern: it combines several typical affirmative postmodern features, of the kind reviewed in the previous two chapters, together with what are, for affirmative postmodernism in general, very atypical Christological and Trinitarian emphases (see Steiner, 1954; Easton, 1975; Harwood, 1979). The fact that Lewis viewed these Christian elements as definitely heterodox (see eg Harwood, 1979; Griffin, 1986) does not detract from the light which, it will be argued, Anthroposophy throws on the postmodern potentialities of the Christian tradition represented by Lewis. In addition, the central place which Steiner (1956) gives to Scholasticism in the development of thought, is very significant in the light of comments earlier in this thesis regarding the relationship between Scholasticism and modern thought. The focus of Steiner on Scholasticism can be compared with the stress which the conservative Catholic theologian, Hans Urs von Balthasar, places on the importance of Scholasticism in the emergence of modern thought. The insights which von Balthasar (1997) provides, in his discussion of developments in the history of Christian thought and their relation to modern thought, have much to offer in the attempt to relate the thought of the similarly conservative CS Lewis to postmodernism. In this chapter, therefore, a detailed discussion of Steiner's Anthroposophy, and a comparison of it with Lewis's Christian thought, will be linked with a comparison of Steiner's and von Balthasar's discussions of Scholasticism and modern thought. This will lead to further conclusions, beyond those reached in previous chapters, regarding the manner and the degree in which Lewis may be considered as postmodern in respect of the positive content of his Christian thought.

8.2 CS Lewis and Anthroposophy

The ambivalence of Lewis towards Steiner and Anthroposophy is clearly revealed in his relationship to Owen Barfield, his close friend and a leading Anthroposophist. The back cover blurb of Barfield's (1966) *Romanticism Comes of Age* cites Lewis's description of Barfield as "the wisest and best of my unofficial advisers" but, in the introduction, Barfield bemoans the fact that even Lewis was not above the "conspiracy of silence" or "boycott" maintained by the academic and intellectual establishment against the work of Steiner.

Some connections or commonalities between Anthroposophy and Lewis's thought have, however, already been suggested in the historical account of Lewis's connection with the nineteenth century roots of affirmative postmodernism, in Chapter Seven. As we have seen in our earlier review of affirmative postmodernism, these include not only spirituality but also epistemology. In pursuing the question of Lewis's relationship with affirmative postmodernism, his associations with Steiner's Anthroposophy, which incorporates both these emphases, are worthy of further exploration. Steiner's 'Spiritual Science' is a highly intricate system of thought, which Lewis (1959) himself professed difficulty in understanding adequately and, in addition, many important points in Steiner's published writings are only referred to allusively in the course of lectures on topics such as education. Therefore no full account of Anthroposophy will be attempted in this thesis. Rather, key issues, which are important both in relation to Lewis's thought, and that of von Balthasar, as well as to contemporary affirmative postmodernism, will be considered with a view to evaluating Lewis's position. That Steiner's thought is significant in this regard is evident from Steyn's (1994) reference to Anthroposophy in her account of the late twentieth century postmodern spirituality of the New Age Movement. Steyn traces the roots of the 'New Age' to the Theosophical movement, which Webb (1971) identifies as one of the prime elements in the nineteenth century 'Flight from Reason'. Webb also mentions Steiner in passing, but it will be evident from the rest of this chapter that it is a mistake to make too strong an identification between Steiner and Theosophy or the 'New Age', as is done by both Griffin (1986) and Steyn. Although Steiner's work was slightly later than that of Nietzsche, by about two decades, it will be argued that there are grounds for the contention that Steiner stands in a similarly proleptic relationship to the affirmative or 'constructive' postmodernism of the latter part of the twentieth century as that accorded to Nietzsche, in relation to nihilistic postmodernism, by Tamas (1996) and Robinson (1999). Steiner's thought, however, does not merely parallel the discussion of spiritually-oriented postmodernisms found in authors such as Steyn (1994) and Harvey (1997). It incorporates also a sophisticated treatment of philosophical issues, which may even be favourably contrasted with the frequently polemical nature of Nietzsche's philosophy (eg Nietzsche, tr.

Hollingdale, 1990). On the other hand, Nietzsche's thought is only partly represented in the postmodernism which developed in the late twentieth century, so that Robinson, in discussing his prophetic status, makes no mention of the proclamation of joy which is so vital to a full view of Nietzsche (Hollingdale, 1990; Novak, 1996). Similarly, it will be shown that there is much in Steiner's thought which finds no echo in current affirmative postmodernism, not even in that of Richard Tarnas, who explicitly draws on Steiner. But if it can be shown that Steiner, for all this singularity, still has relevance in an era of postmodernism, then perhaps a similar case can be made for Lewis, despite the largely negative outcome of the evaluation in the previous chapter.

In Chapter Four the connection of Lewis with Eastern Christianity was used in arguing for an affinity with 'deconstructive' postmodernism. With regard to Anthroposophy, while Webb (1971) mentions Steiner's work in his account of the spiritually-oriented movements which arose in reaction to the nineteenth century's dominant worldview, Steyn's (1994) recognition of the place of Anthroposophy in her study of the emergence of postmodern worldviews is still more significant for the argument of this chapter. However, as has already been noted, Lewis's connection with Anthroposophy is much more equivocal than that with Eastern Christianity. This ambivalence applies similarly to the relationship between Lewis's thought and affirmative postmodernism as a whole, despite a common concern with a positive spiritual content to replace that abandoned by modernity in the development of the 'empty universe' of the modern worldview (Lewis, 1986b). Some reference to a positive appraisal of Steiner's work by Lewis has been made in the context of the discussion of his critical appraisal of modern science in Chapter Five. At the same time, the ambivalent attitude of Lewis towards Anthroposophy was demonstrated in a quotation from a letter to his friend Cecil Harwood, in which he writes of Steiner's 'Occult Science', that it seemed to him, "merely an attempt to know the superintelligible as if it were a new slice of the intelligible" (in Harwood, 1979:26). But, in the same excerpt, the affinities of Lewis with Anthroposophy were also evident in his assertion of the inadequacy of reason "to the richness and spirituality of things" and the presence "even in us, of faculties

embryonic or atrophied that lie in an indefinite margin around the little finite bit of focus that is intelligence". This view of Lewis, even though it may be foreign to a Western Christianity infiltrated by modern thought, should not be regarded as a peculiarity arising specifically out of Anthroposophical influences from his friends. As has been demonstrated in Chapter Four, it accords with the Eastern Christian distinction between the limited (although important) role of the logical faculty of reason, and the functions of the faculties of the 'spiritual intellect'. Irrespective of its source, though, this affinity of Lewis with Anthroposophy is significant in pursuing the question of his status in relation to affirmative postmodernism. But, as will be shown, whatever affinities are to be found, and whatever acknowledgment Lewis himself might have made of the importance of those affinities, a deep divide is apparent when Lewis addresses himself to the Anthroposophical concept of God.

The further details of Lewis's mature views on Steiner's theological concepts will emerge in later in this chapter, but the first reaction of Lewis to Anthroposophy, while in his pre-Christian state of equivocal materialism, was decidedly negative. When two of his close friends, Cecil Harwood and Owen Barfield, embraced Steiner's system, he was appalled:

"Here were gods, spirits, after-life and pre-existence, initiates, occult knowledge, meditation. 'Why - damn it - it's *medieval*', I exclaimed; for I still had all the chronological snobbery of my period ... "
(Lewis, 1959:166).

Here, with a vengeance, was the 'return of the spiritual' referred to previously in this thesis: Anthroposophy offered a spiritual world comprehensible to the mind but accessible only through the highest faculties. Steiner had passed from the Romanticism of Goethe through Theosophy (Griffin, 1986), serving as the first head of the German Theosophic Association, to found his own school of 'Occult Science' or Anthroposophy (Lindskoog, 1998). The aversion of Lewis to anything occult was a stronger motive in his reaction than his philosophical materialism at that time (Lewis, 1959), and, despite the close association which he continued to maintain with Harwood, Barfield, and other Anthroposophist friends

(Harwood, 1979), the negative attitude of Lewis is further indicated by the long-continuing 'Great War' with his closest friend, Owen Barfield, which he maintained on the topic of Anthroposophy. The 'war' began with the outburst quoted above but the immediate consequence of their debate was to move Lewis from his existing philosophical position to one much closer to orthodox Christianity (Lewis, 1959). Barfield achieved this firstly by destroying Lewis's 'chronological snobbery', "the uncritical acceptance of the intellectual climate common to our own age" (Lewis, 1959:167), as well as the corollary to this key element of modernist confidence, the assumption that the beliefs of previous ages must therefore automatically be regarded as false. Secondly, he convinced Lewis that his philosophical position, of sensory realism as ultimate truth, was incompatible with his assumptions, only tenable within a theistic or idealistic view, that logical thought gave indisputable truth, that moral judgements could be 'valid' and that aesthetic experience could be 'valuable' rather than merely pleasing. Unable to believe in a strictly materialistic theory of thought and value, Lewis found himself compelled to discard the philosophy of realism. To Lewis (1959:168), realism had satisfied an emotional need: "I wanted Nature to be quite independent of our observation; something other, indifferent, self-existing". The consequence was not that he surrendered his love of Nature but that, contrary to his naturalistic interpretation of thought and reason, he was compelled to admit that, apart from the material aspect of the universe, there was another side to the reality of the cosmos as a whole, even if, at that stage, he recognised it only as 'mental' rather than 'spiritual'. Thus the opposition between the Christian Lewis and his Anthroposophical friends was only one part of a bigger picture in which, in crucial respects, they stood on the same side. The theism which Lewis initially adopted (although at the time he did not recognise it as such) was one pertaining only to the existence of Absolute Mind (Lewis, 1955) and had no further associations of either a Christian theological or an Anthroposophical nature. And while Lewis's *Pilgrim's Regress* (1977) soon took him further, it was not in the direction of Anthroposophy. But his journey to Christian orthodoxy did not preclude him from coming to hold further understandings in common with Anthroposophy (see Lewis, in Harwood, 1979). Against this must be set evidence such as Lewis's complaint that Steiner's theological

position amounted to an 'inverted Arianism', and his opinion, in a reply to a question from a correspondent, that "You can trust Steiner about fertilizers but not about the nature of Jesus Christ" (in Griffin, 1986).

Other points of contact between the thought of Lewis and Steiner have been dealt with in Chapter Five, where the discussion was focused on the correspondence between Lewis's views on rationality and the postmodern 'deconstruction' of reason, as well as his observations on the role of imagination and myth as means of attaining truth. It can be argued that these constitute an account of an aspect of Lewis's thought which may, in its own right, be regarded as affirmatively postmodern, but they also find direct parallels in Steiner's thought (see Steiner, 1947; Easton, 1975). Lewis's understanding of the possibility of knowledge which transcends the modern, rational-empiricist framework is not identical with Steiner's view on the supersensible perception, which Steiner sees as necessary for the "ultimate grasp of spiritual things" (Harwood, 1979:27). Harwood refers to this as a process of "raising into consciousness (through Intuition) of the 'truth felt in the bones'". Nor is Lewis's view precisely what Tarnas (1996) conveys in his description (cited earlier in this thesis) of the employment of a full range of faculties, beyond the merely rational, in a participatory epistemology. There is, nevertheless, a great deal in common between Lewis and Steiner with regard to the recourse to extra- or supra-rational faculties, whether intuitive, imaginative, aesthetic, or perhaps more spiritual in nature. In his science-fiction trilogy (Lewis, 1938; 1943; 1945), Lewis's treatment of this type of subject matter does much to explain the observation of Harwood (1979:25) that "not a few people found in his various works ... ideas, descriptions, allusions that seemed so close to anthroposophy that they wrote to ask him if he got them from Steiner". Lewis reacted to this somewhat indignantly in his letter to Harwood but, given his close association with Anthroposophist friends, it is not unlikely that there might have been some influence on his thought from that quarter. However, alongside this speculation must be set the united testimony of all variants of the Christian tradition, at least those untainted by modern influence, to the reality of a spiritual world of the same general kind portrayed by Steiner. The pivotal role of the

principle of spiritual evolution in Steiner's thought (eg Steiner, 1972), makes it inconceivable for him to think in terms of a mere return to previous understandings of the spiritual, nevertheless in a real sense there is a return, in Steiner's work, to a recognition of the reality of the spiritual, denied by 'Enlightenment' thought as much as in Cupitt's postmodernism. That return to the spiritual may take a 'revivalist' form as in the Neo-pagan postmodernism of Harvey (1997), or an evolutionist form as in Steyn's (1994) treatment of the postmodernism of the 'New Age', but Lewis's reliance on the traditional Christian understanding of spiritual reality is not a mere traditionalism and is closer to Steiner's position in recognising a principle of development in human spiritual understanding (Lewis, 1955). Lewis (1959:166) could still, however, assert that he "never came within a hundred miles of accepting the thing myself", despite the conversion of his friends to Anthroposophy and their acknowledged influence on him. The relative balance between this distance and Lewis's contrary closeness to Anthroposophy will be addressed in the rest of this chapter with reference to the two aspects highlighted in this section: epistemology and spirituality.

8.3 Monism and epistemology in Anthroposophy

In approaching the topic of Steiner's monism and its relationship to epistemology, it is helpful to begin with the writings of Lewis and Tarnas, to both of whose thought that of Steiner can be related, although in different ways. In the previous chapter we have seen how Lewis (1960), in his *Miracles*, identifies monism as the target of his book. In stressing the distinction between Nature and Supernature Lewis is concerned to demonstrate that Nature is not a totally closed system and that, despite its relative autonomy, it is open to 'traffic' from other systems. These systems, in Lewis's view, may include other created 'Natures' apart from what would have to be termed the Absolute Supernatural, that is the realm of God or, in the phrase of Lewis (1963), 'the Land of the Trinity'. But one created system might stand in a relation of Supernature to Nature to another in a relative sense, by virtue of its ability to exert effects on the other in an asymmetrical relationship. In his science fiction fantasy writing, an angelic realm of being is portrayed by Lewis (1938; 1943; 1945) as standing in just such an asymmetrical relation to our universe. The same general type of

asymmetrical relation is outlined in the discussion of the operation of reason in human minds by Lewis (1960), referred to in Chapter Seven. Lewis there finds it appropriate to apply the term 'supernatural', despite the unusual nature of this usage, because reason exists in the human mind as an element alien to Nature. By its participation in the divine Reason (Lewis, 1959; 1960), the human mind is to that extent separated from Nature, and therefore able to comprehend it relatively objectively. Despite the case that has been made in the previous chapter for a degree of concordance between the thought of Lewis and Tarnas on the topic of participatory epistemology, it is evident also that there is an essential cleavage between Lewis's thought on this matter and the monism which is fundamental to Tarnas's position. This cleavage is inextricably associated with the difference between their theologies: Lewis's orthodox Christian theism, in recognising the separation between God and Nature referred to in his *Miracles*, thereby allows the conditions for the relatively autonomous operation of reason within Nature which Tarnas could only categorise as epistemological dualism; on the other hand, in the understanding of Tarnas (1996) 'Nature', which Tarnas describes as bringing forth its own order (of knowledge) within the human mind, is synonymous with the Divine Mother. The theological monism of Tarnas is thus intimately connected with the monism of his participatory epistemology. Steiner (1979) deals explicitly and at length with this question of dualism and monism in his discussion of human knowledge and freedom. He begins his attack on dualism by making a contrast with an inadequate and naive monism. But, in developing his theme, he argues powerfully for a critically thought-out monism as the only satisfactory alternative to the dualism which, in his view, doomed modern thought to an inconsistency at its very foundations. (The fact that Steiner's *Philosophy of Freedom*, referred to in its 1979 edition in this thesis, was first published in 1894, gives it special significance in the context of the focus of this thesis on prophetic prescience regarding the postmodern attack on modern thought.) Although Steiner (1979), employs the notion of monism emphatically, he does so with particular reference to the development of thought while, elsewhere, appearing to rely heavily on Christian Trinitarian theology (Harwood, 1979, Steiner, 1972). The repudiation by Steiner (1979) of the suggestion that his work is epistemological, and his contention that it is in fact

a 'monism of thought', will be considered later in relation to his views on the cosmic thought of the *Logos*. For the present, though, the epistemological dimension which Tarnas (1996) identifies in Steiner's work will be pursued in the immediate discussion which follows. In the subsequent discussion in this chapter, it will be necessary to try to determine whether the association between an epistemological and a theological monism is as cogent in the case of Steiner as it is in the thought of Tarnas (1996). In particular, in the light of the preceding discussion, it must be asked whether it could be otherwise than that an epistemological monism, or a 'monism of thought', should be rooted in a theological or cosmological monism. Lewis's view of the heterodox character of Steiner's concept of God will need to be investigated in this regard.

In his account Tarnas's initial focus is also on epistemological considerations but, as we have seen in Chapter Six and Seven, he proceeds from his case for a postmodern, participatory epistemology to the spirituality of the Divine Mother. Although Steiner's concept of God differs, to some degree at least, from that of Tarnas, the parallels in their epistemology are clearly apparent in reading Steiner's *Philosophy of Freedom* (1979). Tarnas in fact acknowledges his debt to Steiner by including the original publication of this book in his lengthy list of significant dates in the history of the development of Western thought. It is therefore not surprising that Tarnas's reliance on Goethe, in outlining his case for a participatory epistemology, is also reflected in the experience of Steiner. In his introduction to Steiner's book (1979:vii-viii), Michael Wilson notes that,

"In Goethe he recognised one who had been able to perceive the spiritual in nature, even though he had not carried this as far as a direct perception of the spirit. Steiner was able to bring a new understanding to Goethe's scientific work through this insight into his perception of nature. Since no existing philosophical theory could take this into account, and since Goethe had never stated explicitly what his philosophy of life was, Steiner filled this need ...".

Despite Wilson's emphasis on 'perception of the spirit', the spiritual aspect is not strongly to the fore in the argument in the chapters on knowledge in *The Philosophy of Freedom*.

It is, however, essential to Steiner's philosophy, and emerges more explicitly elsewhere. Steiner's initial offering on the epistemological issue, published in 1886, was the introductory *Theory of Knowledge Implicit in Goethe's World-Conception* but Wilson (in Steiner, 1979:viii) points out that it was in *The Philosophy of Freedom* that "the content which had formed the centre of his life's striving was placed before the world". Wilson notes that Steiner was deeply disappointed at the reception it received in an intellectual climate which was not ready to assimilate the understanding of knowledge which it conveyed. That climate was conditioned by the high modernism which was to suffer its first real setbacks only in the early decades of the next century. This change in the fortunes of modern thought, arising from socio-political events (Breisach, 1994) but also in consequence of the development of the 'New Physics' (Davies, 1984), failed to bring any immediate, or even medium term, wider recognition of Steiner's philosophical contribution. In view of the theological divergence which will be shown to exist between Lewis and Steiner, it may seem paradoxical that Lewis should publicly draw attention to the potential of Steiner's epistemological work. This he did, even if somewhat diffidently, in the 1943 Riddell Memorial Lectures at the University of Durham, published as *The Abolition of Man* (Lewis, 1978). Lewis's statement, quoted fully in Chapter Five, refers to the approach of modern science but, as will be shown in the following paragraph, is of wider, epistemological relevance. In it he notes, with particular reference to science, that he has detected some signs of a recognition,

"that Goethe's approach to nature deserves fuller consideration - that even Dr Steiner may have seen something that orthodox researchers have missed."
(Lewis, 1978: 47)

Lewis's immediate concern, in referring to Goethe and Steiner, is to suggest a counter to the destructive effects of modern science's treatment of the things which it studies. A number of points are raised by Lewis in the passage from which this comment is taken, but the epistemological concern is primary, with other issues arising out of it. In view of the importance accorded to Richard Tarnas's postmodernism in this thesis, and because of his reliance on the epistemological insights of Goethe and Steiner in the development of his

affirmative postmodernism, reference will once again be made to Tarnas in relating Steiner's thought to that of Lewis. While this will necessarily involve some revision of points made in the previous two chapters, this discussion will go beyond the commentary there in comparing the thought of Lewis and Steiner on the issue of a participatory epistemology.

A number of points are raised by Lewis (1978) in commending Steiner's epistemological approach as worthy of consideration, but he begins by looking to the development of a consciousness "that the 'natural object' produced by analysis and abstraction is not reality but only a view". To Lewis, the danger of the approach to science, which he seeks to counter here, is aggravated by an accompanying current of thought in which value is reduced to mere subjective taste, a philosophical issue whose practical outcome is the main burden of his argument in *The Abolition of Man*. Lewis points to the ill effects, within modernity, of regarding nature, living things, and other human beings, as mere objects, while simultaneously responding to them without the constraints of a morality which possesses some reality beyond the individual's own psychological processes. The warm commendation, on the back-cover of this work of Lewis by his Anthroposophist friend, Owen Barfield, provides a clear indication of the congruence between the thought of Steiner and Lewis on these issues. In the previous chapter we have already noted the account by Lewis (1986b) of the consequences of the application of a subject-object dualism in the history of science, in the emergence of 'The Empty Universe', as well as his summing up of the final outcome of this process: "The Subject is as empty as the Object" (Lewis, 1989b:83). In considering this issue we find our focus shifting from epistemological issues to matters spiritual, but after a brief excursion in this direction we will return to the epistemological theme of this section. In his description of the abandonment of the spiritual content of the universe in the course of the emptying process, from the spirits of the trees through to the human self, Lewis also portrays much which is common to the worldview of Steiner. The mode of his portrayal is merely descriptive, and no claim is made that any particular element of this spiritual content is necessarily true. It is clear, though, at least by the point at which Lewis deals with the reduction of the human person to a complex of physico-chemical

processes, that he is committed to that positive content in principle, if not in all the details which he describes. As we have seen, it is particularly in his imaginative works that Lewis freely depicts spiritual realities in such a way that some readers were moved to enquire whether he had embraced Anthroposophy (Harwood, 1979). Although this would be no more logical than to conclude that his inclusion of fabulous creatures such as centaurs, in his *Tales of Narnia*, demonstrated belief in their actual existence, one can at least infer a certain sympathy towards such belief. Thus, in general, a degree of sympathy on the part of Lewis toward the Anthroposophical worldview may be asserted, specifically in a shared opposition to the reductionistic materialism of modern science, but without at all implying anything near an identification of Lewis with the thought of Steiner. In particular, this kind of limited agreement can be discerned in the matter of subject-object dualism which has already been highlighted as a concern of Lewis. In Lewis's view, what Steiner had seen was the misleading nature of modern epistemological dualism. Lewis concurs with Steiner that, by absolutising the subject-object polarity, an unwarranted substantiality is attributed to the product of analysis and abstraction. Paradoxically, this has the further consequence of absolutising the human subject as the constructor of the object of perception, thus emptying the object of perception of its reality. However, it must be noted especially that the concurrence between Lewis and Steiner does not extend to the monism of the latter. As we shall see, in contrast to the discontinuity with Nature in Lewis's picture of the operation of reason in human minds, it seems that for Steiner this dualism is overcome in the realisation of the participation of the human knower in the oneness of the totality of interconnected Being.

It is not easy to determine from his writings exactly what Steiner's understanding of the relation of God to world is and, therefore, some degree of caution is required in this regard. But it will be shown that Steiner's 'monism of thought' which, following Tarnas (1996), has been discussed here in terms of epistemology, cannot be held separate from a theological and cosmological monism. Whatever the implications of Steiner's Trinitarian view of God, it was not sufficient to convince Lewis (Harwood, 1979) that the Anthroposophical

understanding of God recognised the absolutely supernatural aspect of the divine nature which he sought to guard in his case against monism in *Miracles* (1960). What is incontrovertible is that Steiner (1979) commits himself vigorously to the use of the term 'monism' in dealing not only with the nature of thought but also human destiny, while Lewis (1960), in defending the orthodox Christian view of the relationship of God to the world, declares himself outrightly opposed to monism. It is, however, necessary to recognise the different connotations of their respective uses of the term, and the significance of these as we seek to interpret what each means. Specifically with regard to theology, Lewis (1955) is willing to come very near to a Zoroastrian type of theological dualism (Zaehner, 1959a), with its polarity of good and evil at the level of the divine, even though he clearly rejects it. But, as we have seen, he is firmly committed to another kind of dualism, between Nature and Supernature. This dualism of Lewis has a theological-cosmological basis which expresses itself in epistemological consequences - and here we return to the cleavage, referred to earlier, between the position of Lewis and that of Tarnas and, as will be argued later, that of Steiner also. For although Lewis (1978) offers a qualified commendation of the position of Steiner, with regard to the epistemological basis which it provides for a 'redeemed science', and although Lewis (1986b) concurs with Steiner on the destructive consequences of the modern view of the world, the issue of Steiner's monism remains as a crucial factor dividing them.

Tarnas (1996) is in agreement with Lewis (1986b) when he points out that the subject-object dualism highlighted by Steiner (1979), was the source of the scepticism which developed within modern thought. He argues, however, that it originated prior to the modern age in Medieval philosophy, which itself had twin roots in Greek and Hebrew thought. In Medieval Christian philosophy, God is understood in terms of the fusion of the transcendent God of the Old Testament with the Platonic God of the world of Ideas, and occupies a position outside of the created world. The distinction between Creator and creation, portrayed in the vision of Julian of Norwich, and discussed in terms of the distinction between Supernature and Nature in Lewis (1960), has epistemological implications. It is

associated with the relative autonomy of humanity as rational being: the human knower participates, not in the interconnected wholeness of Being, but in the divine Reason which stands separate from Nature and which operates in the human mind by gift from outside Nature. In consequence of this, it has been argued in the previous chapter, in Lewis's view humanity is enabled to operate from the metaphysically privileged position, referred to by Snyder (1988), by participation in divine Reason - which is not a property of the world of nature (Lewis, 1959; 1960). Here lies the crucial point at which the possible differences between Lewis and Steiner must be assessed: Steiner (1979) sees human thought as operating by participation in Cosmic Thought, which for him is identified with 'the Christ being', but what has to be clarified is the relative balance between immanence and transcendence in Steiner's view, and how this differs from Lewis's understanding of the dualism which pertains to 'human reason'. As we have seen, Lewis (1960) points out that in this understanding it is not appropriate to speak of 'human reason' as such. In itself, human nature is not privileged in the sense accorded it modern thought - Lewis's dualism does not confer on human minds the inherent autonomy accorded to the human subject in the modernism of the 'Enlightenment', for God is the Grantor and Guarantor of the position of the human subject in Christian thought, a privileged position which modern thought presumed to retain without reference to God. But the repudiation, within modernity, of the divine Guarantor of truth, rendered the privileged position of the human subject untenable even though, as Snyder points out, the implications of Nietzsche's admonitions regarding the 'death of God' were not immediately heeded. But Snyder is equally dismissive of the validity of the Christian retention of the concept of God. It remains to be considered, though, whether the theological roots of Steiner's epistemology are different in kind from those which attracted the postmodern attack. What is significant in this regard is that the postmodernism of Tamas (1996), like that put forward by Snyder, repudiates the transcendent God of Christian orthodoxy, but at the same time it upholds Steiner's epistemology. This suggests that a comparison between traditional Christian theology, advocated by Lewis, and Anthroposophical Christology and Trinitarianism, may prove to be a fruitful line of enquiry as we proceed in this chapter. For, if there are grounds for the

exemption of Steiner's thought from the postmodern project of 'deconstruction', then a consideration of these may be significant to the evaluation of the standing of Lewis's thought in this regard - and may throw further light on what has already been argued regarding non-metaphysical theology in Chapter Five.

8.4 The nature of participation in the *Logos* in Anthroposophy and Christianity

In Snyder's view, Christianity cannot extricate itself from the 'end of modernity' because of its reliance on the concept of God. But, as indicated in Chapter Five, what is crucial to this postmodern perspective on the undermining of the Christian position is the use that is made of the concept of God as the basis for a philosophical system. It was argued there that a different light is thrown on this question by the possibilities of a non-metaphysical theology, in general, and, in particular, Lewis's understanding that the divine Presence cannot be pinned down within any intellectual system. But the theology and epistemology of the orthodox Christian position defended by Lewis is subject to attack not only from the side of 'deconstructive' postmodernism, as represented by Snyder, but also from that of the affirmative postmodernism developed by Tarnas. This brings us back to the issue of the type of dualism implied in Lewis's thought by his description of the human mind's disengagement from Nature, through its participation in divine Reason. It was on the very point of the relation of the human mind to Reason that Lewis was put on the path to his Christian conversion by his Anthroposophist friend, Barfield, who convinced him,

"that mind was no late-come epiphenomenon; that the whole universe was, in the last resort, mental; that our logic was participation in a cosmic *Logos*."

Here is a very important commonality in the worldview of Christianity and Anthroposophy and, furthermore, it is important to note that Steiner's (1947) crucial emphasis on Christ as the cosmic *Logos*, allied with his explicit reliance on Origen's *Logos* Christology (Steiner, 1956), places him far closer to orthodox Christianity than the supposedly Christian postmodernism of Borg (1994), with its reduction of Christ to a 'spirit person' on a level with a shaman. With regard to Lewis, from the vague theism of an Absolute Mind, to which this

interaction with Barfield led him initially, Lewis proceeded to full acceptance of the God of Christianity. It is in this connection that the Trinitarian and Christological emphasis of Steiner must be evaluated. It will be argued in this chapter that, despite a great deal of convergence in theological phraseology and an insistent profession of commitment to Christianity, Steiner's thought diverges from the orthodox Christian concept of God in a somewhat similar way to that of Tarnas even if, perhaps, to a lesser degree. In Tarnas and, as will be argued, in Steiner also, there is a theological monism underlying their epistemological monism. Thus, despite other affinities between Steiner's theological position and orthodox Christianity, we come back to the question of how far it can be argued that Lewis can be identified with the type of postmodern, participatory epistemology set out in the work of Steiner. For the fundamental distinction between Nature and Supernature, upheld and associated with the operation of 'human reason' in Lewis (1960), is set up in opposition to all forms of monism - and must this not inevitably include that of Steiner too? And must Lewis then not be much closer to the modern subject-object dualism which Steiner (1979) condemns, than to Steiner? A partial answer has already been provided in the previous chapter, as well as in the present discussion, but a fuller consideration of the position of Lewis and the Christian tradition will emerge later in this chapter, particularly in the comparison between Steiner's and von Balthasar's (1997) accounts of the development of Scholastic and modern thought.

Crucial to the problem of the validity of modern thought, encapsulated in the introduction of Snyder (1988) to the work of Vattimo, is an understanding of its development. It has been stressed repeatedly in this thesis that what is at issue is the divorce which is implied in modern thought between the human knower and the world which is known. As we have seen, it was not left to the nihilistic postmodernism of the late twentieth century to be the first to appropriate this insight: not without familiarity with Nietzsche (Wilson, 1979), Steiner had recognised the fatal flaw in modern thought almost a century earlier and had offered a corrective. The extent to which Christian thought, as represented by Lewis, and especially as formulated in the Middle Ages (von Balthasar, 1997), can offer an alternative

diagnosis and prescription to that of Steiner, must be explored in the rest of this chapter. But as we have noted already, the separation between world and God, or Nature and Supernature in the terms of Lewis (1960), expresses itself in a division between Nature and the human knower which is rooted in the latter's participation in 'Supernatural Reason'. By deduction, the opposition of this position to monism, asserted by Lewis (1960), would be characterised as epistemological dualism on the basis of Steiner's thought. Steiner's thought is validly developed further by Tarnas (1996:395-6) who, in his discussion of postmodernism, takes as his point of departure the proposition that "objective essences, or things-in-themselves, are neither accessible or positable". Tarnas emphasises that "the knowing subject is never disengaged from the body or from the world, which form the background and condition of every cognitive act" so that "reality must in some sense be hewed out by the human mind and will" But he also notes that "reality is intransigent or provoking in many respects" (Tarnas,1996:396). Thus, even though dualistic objectivism is repudiated, unbridled relativism is countered. Reality can only be known from the perspective of our own position within it but, by virtue of its intransigent or obdurate nature it is resistant to all attempts to fashion it totally according to an image or, (in postmodernist terminology) a discourse, of our own making. Therefore, although all knowledge can only be had in a perspective, there is no cause to jump from this perspectivism to a surrender to scepticism and nihilism. This point is similar to Steiner's position, presented in *The Philosophy of Freedom*: the world is known, and can only be known, from a point of view, the perspective of the position of the human knower within the whole of reality. Sardar (1998) comments scathingly on modern thought with regard to the same issue when he points out that in non-Western philosophy there has always been a realisation that truth is only available to human beings in a perspective, but without it being felt necessary to leap to nihilistic conclusions on this account. Lewis's reference to the epistemological contribution of Goethe and Steiner makes exactly the same point when he states that the object of perception "is not reality but only a view" (Lewis, 1978:47). But, while Steiner emphasises perspectivism and particularity in relation to perception, he puts forward a very different view with regard to thinking.

Steiner (1979) states that, unlike perception, thinking reaches beyond the individual and relates to the universal. For Steiner, the idea that thinking involves a bottom-up process, whereby perception gives rise to thought, or percepts to concepts, is the cognitive equivalent of attempting to lift oneself by one's own bootstraps. He asks what a percept without a concept can really be and then answers: "a mere juxtaposition in space, a mere succession in time, a mass of unconnected detail" (Steiner, 1979:72) - it is the concept which brings order and form to the percept, and thus thinking which informs perception. In asserting this, Steiner is very much in harmony with later currents of thought (see eg Popper, 1972; Tarnas, 1996), but he adds a further emphasis, which goes beyond anything which emerged in the subsequent development of modern and postmodern thought:

"In contrast to the content of the percept which is given to us from without, the content of thinking appears inwardly.. The form in which this first makes its appearance we will call *intuition*. *Intuition* is for thinking what *observation* is for the percept. Intuition and observation are the sources of our knowledge."
(Steiner, 1979:73)

While observation relates to the particularity of the observer's situation, 'intuition' is the link between the observer's mind and universal thought, immanent in the cosmos. But observation is dependent on intuition, for an observed object "remains unintelligible until we have within ourselves the corresponding intuition". There is a further aspect to the function of the higher cognitive faculties, though: Steiner stresses that perceptual processes operate by tearing a thing from its context, but this act of isolating only has validity for the needs of our own subjective organisation: "A thing cut off from the world-whole does not exist" (Steiner, 1979:74). Therefore thinking - making a thing intelligible - "means nothing less than to place a thing in the context from which it has been torn" because,

"The enigmatic character of an object consists in its separateness. But this separation is our own making, and can, within the world of concepts be overcome again."

The significance of Steiner's monism to his epistemology is evident here. The individuality of perception is overcome by thinking which relates to the universal. But thinking is not to

be understood, as modern psychology portrays it, as an operation occurring merely within the mind of the individual, instead it "welds our separate individuality into one whole with the cosmos" (Steiner, 1979:70). The separateness of the object of perception is paralleled by the separateness of the individual human mind which does the perceiving, but both divisions are ultimately illusory and are to be healed by the development of a higher consciousness. The perspectivism which Steiner acknowledges with regard to perception does not fall away into relativism and scepticism, as in 'deconstructive' postmodernism, because observation is complemented by 'intuition', which relates the human mind to the universal, or the whole. The *Logos* or Cosmic Thought is, for Steiner, a vital aspect of this whole into which the human individual is welded. Cosmic Thought is immanent within the whole, as it must be, in terms of the monism so strongly asserted by Steiner (1979). And here we are brought up against Lewis's orthodox Christian witness to the *Logos*. The cosmic *Logos* is also affirmed as Christ and the Son of God in Anthroposophy. But Lewis's faith in the second Person of the Trinitarian God is set within a theology which affirms the transcendence of God in a way which will be shown, in this chapter, to be incompatible with Steiner's thought.

As we shall see in the following section, to argue that Steiner's monism is associated with an unequivocal immanentism, is a proposition which might be contested on the basis of elements within Steiner's very extensive and highly complex work. But in charging Steiner with an inverted form of Arianism, in which the Father is subordinated to the Son (in Harwood, 1979), Lewis points to a monism and an immanentism in Steiner's thought which is contrary to the transcendence of God in the Nature-Supernature schema upheld in the name of orthodox Christian tradition in *Miracles* (Lewis, 1960). This issue must be expanded upon in the next section, but the implications of the charge of Arianism in the context of the present discussion must be noted: what Lewis perceives in Anthroposophy is that the 'Christ being', so crucial to Steiner's whole system, although divine, and although expressing the divinity of the 'Father principle' (Barfield, 1966), is part of 'the whole show' of reality, as Lewis (1960) puts it. To put it in other terms, the cosmic thought of the *Logos*

is immanent within the cosmos, but Lewis cannot detect a sufficient, complementary emphasis on transcendence, of the kind essential to the understanding of Christ in orthodox Christianity. And Lewis's statement that he did not believe that his Anthroposophist friend Harwood could affirm the Christian belief in 'God the Father, Almighty' (in Harwood, 1979), indicates his judgement that, in Anthroposophy, not only the Son but also the Father is understood within the parameters of a theological monism, which Lewis would see as the theological complement to Steiner's participatory epistemology. If this is the case then the emphasis on divine immanence, identified as characteristic of affirmative postmodernism in Chapter Six, is confirmed in this status by Steiner's thought. Furthermore, the reliance which Tarnas (1996) places on Steiner, in developing the epistemological basis for his affirmative postmodernism, must then be recognised as being associated with a common theological monism, even though Tarnas is not averse to the identification of this with pantheism, a term which is (as we shall see) repudiated in Anthroposophy. But, whatever the differences between Lewis and Steiner, or Tarnas, they are united in opposing those who rested their aspirations to truth on the 'Enlightenment' premise of the autonomy of the human subject. For all three it is only by participation in something much larger than itself that the human mind can approach a true knowledge of reality. In Anthroposophy and Tarnas's affirmative postmodernism this is by participation in the universal divine thought which is immanent in Nature, but in the Christian worldview of CS Lewis it is by participation in the divine Reason which irrupts from beyond Nature into her, at the points of functioning of human minds.

Despite the differences between them which have been pointed out, it is highly significant for this thesis that Lewis commends Steiner's approach to knowledge in the excerpt (Lewis, 1978) on which so much emphasis has been placed in the discussion in this section. But this leaves the problem of how Lewis is able to comprehend within his thought both the relative autonomy of the human epistemological agent, evident in the anti-monistic position which he presents in his *Miracles*, and the perspectivism found in Steiner's monism, also advocated by Tarnas, which is endorsed by Lewis. At this stage, though, it must be emphasised again

that the autonomy of the human mind in Lewis's understanding is a relative one which must be qualified not only in terms of participation in divine Reason but also by participation in the Christian community, as in the view of Lewis (1955) discussed in the previous chapter. Conversely, the freedom of the human individual, which is the ideal towards which Steiner (1979) sees spiritual evolution directed, ultimately implies an autonomy which matches any which Lewis may be accused of attributing to humanity. For Tarnas (1996), that autonomy implies a separation, which operates in consequence of the modern and Western mode of perceiving ourselves as individuals, and which is to be overcome in postmodernity: in experiencing reintegration with the ground of our existence we overcome the sense of alienation which is the inescapable accompaniment of this separation. This is the basis of Tarnas's spirituality of the Divine Mother - for to speak of a 'ground of being' is both to deny the atomism of modern thought, which posits the separateness of objects, and of individuals, and simultaneously to affirm a wider, inclusive reality. But, in Steiner's thought, a union with the divine, apparently similar to that propounded by Tarnas, is held alongside an emphasis on individuality. This demands a comparison with the idea of divinisation in Christian theology. As will be stressed later, in reviewing von Balthasar's (1997) discussion of the question of the divinisation of humanity, there is a vital sense in which union with the divine is as central to orthodox Christianity as it is to Steiner's Anthroposophy. Furthermore, in their different ways, both understand union as occurring without compromising human individuality and, in pursuing this issue, we are brought back to the question of personhood which was recognised as problematic in Chapter Six. But, before proceeding to a comparison in this regard, the underlying theological differences between these two positions must first be investigated further in order to elucidate the relation of Anthroposophy to Lewis's orthodoxy, and of both to the affirmative postmodernism of which Tarnas is a prime representative.

8.5 Monism and God in Anthroposophy

As we have seen earlier in this thesis, it is the emergence of a pantheistic concept of God which Tarnas (1996) identifies as the crucial break between Romanticism, on one hand, and both 'Enlightenment' deism and traditional theism, on the other. It is this pantheism which is, in Tarnas's account, the vital contribution of Romanticism to a positive postmodern content to fill the void left by the collapse of modern thought. Furthermore, despite their preference for panentheism, it is still the abandonment of the traditional concept of God which Griffin (1989b) and Borg (1997) specify as critical to the establishment of the postmodernism which they advocate. This issue has already been dealt with in the previous chapter but is worth summarising here specifically in leading into a consideration of Steiner's position. Lewis (1955) acknowledges the panentheism of evolutionist philosophers, such as Henri Bergson (to whom Griffin himself makes explicit reference), as a midpoint between theism and pantheism. But he does so only to reject it firmly on account of what it has in common with pantheism. It must be noted again that the panentheism which Lewis considers here is not merely one in which the transcendence and immanence of God are held in balance, as in the usage of Ware (1979). Rather, it is that of 'Creative Evolution' in which God is conceived of primarily as emerging and developing with and within the world. In this regard Lewis (1955:33) finds meaningless the notion of a God "bringing life into existence and leading it to perfection" if the "striving" or "purposiveness" of 'Emergent Evolution' is not the expression of a Mind such as is allowed for only by theism. Lewis's judgement of this type of 'Process' panentheism might be hotly contested, not least by Griffin or Borg, but it is not the task of this thesis to settle such philosophico-theological debates. What is demonstrated here is Lewis's antipathy to a view which is commonly offered within affirmative postmodernism as an alternative to pantheism, and this must be regarded as constituting significant negative evidence in this thesis's project of assessing Lewis's role as 'prophet of postmodernism'. The uncompromising attitude of Lewis in his commitment to an unqualified 'supernatural theism' is rooted in the opposition to monism which he identifies as the main theme of his *Miracles* (Lewis, 1960). Thus the case which Griffin (1989b) makes for a 'natural theism', although

it might elude the charge of pantheism which Griffin wishes to repudiate, is clearly monistic in its unwillingness to countenance the distinction which Lewis (1960) makes between Nature and Supernature, even in relation to God. But what of the significance of this for Lewis's relation to Anthroposophy?

Harwood (1979:28) responds to Lewis's attacks on Steiner's understanding of the nature of God by emphasising that the "Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is as vital to anthroposophy as it is to the Athanasian Creed" and quotes Lewis to the effect that Anthroposophy possesses many points of agreement with orthodox Christianity. This, together with the crucial importance to Steiner of the 'Mystery of Golgotha' in the history of the world (see also Barfield, 1966; Steiner, 1972), might seem to place Anthroposophy so far within the orbit of traditional Christianity as to disqualify the judgement of Steyn (1994) that it is a 'New Age' postmodern movement. Similarly, it might seem too traditionally orthodox even for the avowedly Christian postmodernism of Marcus Borg and David Ray Griffin. Lewis, however, concurs with Steyn on the divergence of Anthroposophy from Christian orthodoxy, and what is pivotal to Lewis's estimation is Anthroposophy's concept of God. In a letter to Harwood (1979: 27-28) in 1933, Lewis identified only one crucial element in objecting to Anthroposophy from the traditional Christian perspective:

"I don't think it can say, 'I believe in one God the Father Almighty'. My feeling is that even if there are a thousand orders of beneficent beings above us, still the universe is a cheat unless at the back of them all there is the one God of Christianity. But ... there is certainly quite a lot for us to agree on as against nearly the whole contemporary world!"

It is precisely here, on the point of belief in 'one God the Father Almighty', where orthodox Christianity's 'supernatural theism' is judged by Griffin (1989b) and Borg (1997) as being inadequate to the postmodern era, that Lewis draws the line between his position and Steiner's thought. And, despite the different emphasis which Harwood (1979) places on the issue, it will be argued in what follows that it is indeed Steiner's theological understanding

which distinguishes his position from that of Lewis and Christian orthodoxy. That understanding appears, rather, to place Steiner on the side of Borg, Griffin and other affirmative postmodernists - thus again highlighting the question of Lewis's status in this regard. Steiner's position is expressed in his admonition (1995:11-12) that the child should be looked on,

"with the deepest reverence, knowing that here is a being whose nature is of God and the spirit has descended to earth."

The difference between the orthodox Christian notion, of sharing in the divine nature by regeneration, and Steiner's understanding of human nature being 'of God', is spelt out explicitly elsewhere in the same work (Steiner, 1995: 66):

"God is as great as the world-ocean. Your soul is a drop in this ocean of God. But as the water of the sea, when it forms a drop, is the same as the great sea, so your soul is the same as the great God is, only it is one little drop of it."

Here we see the affinity of Steiner's thought with the thought of Tarnas (1996) and, equally, the divergence of both from Lewis's orthodox Christian position. Despite the complaint of Steiner (1956:115) that "this is not Pantheism, nor any of those things on the score of which Spiritual Science is calumniated", clearly many did perceive, in statements such as these, decided differences between Steiner's teaching and orthodox Christianity. As we have seen, Lewis too must be counted amongst this number. The emphatic and explicit commitment of Steiner (1979) to monism, even if this is asserted primarily in relation to his epistemology, is particularly suggestive of significant differences from Lewis's position. Such differences, as well as the commonalities between Steiner's ideas and those of contemporary affirmative postmodernism on the nature of God, must be investigated in the process of coming to a final conclusion regarding Lewis's 'postmodernity'. In this regard, the reliance of Tarnas (1996) on Steiner's ideas in developing his own affirmative postmodernism is especially noteworthy.

In contrast with these grounds for classifying Steiner's thought with other spiritually-oriented postmodernisms, the atypical quality of Anthroposophical postmodernism is highlighted when we consider the issue of human individuality, mentioned in the conclusion to the preceding section. But despite this and other indications of affinity with Christianity which are to be found in Steiner's sometimes cryptic writings, this stress on individuality is distinctly divergent from that upheld in the Christian tradition. It is on the matter of the relationship of human persons to the Godhead that Anthroposophy differs: it would seem that to Steiner human individuality has to emerge from an original unity within the Fatherhood of God (Steiner, 1969). But, as opposed to Steiner's understanding of the individuality of Christ's being as the 'Son', the references of Steiner (1947) to God as 'Father' appear to display the same aversion to conceiving God as an entity which, in the theology of JAT Robinson's *Honest to God*, draws the attack of Lewis (1979d). Although his thought on this point is generally elusive, Steiner's conception of 'the Father' appears to have a degree of commonality with Tarnas's (1996) understanding of the 'Great Mother' as the 'ground of being'. It seems it is this which leads Lewis to extrapolate from his assertion of belief in 'one God the Father Almighty', as the dividing line between him and Anthroposophy, to the conclusion, (in Harwood, 1979: 29), that,

"what we need to specially emphasise is the 'Neither is this Thou' aspect. ... I think the real difference between us is on a more general topic [than this letter's main topic of the letter, marriage and erotic love] ... I don't think the conception of *creatureliness* [Lewis's italics] is part of your system at all, and your system is anthropocentric. That's the real 'great divide'."

Harwood (1979: 29) goes on to confirm the diagnosis of difference by contrasting Lewis's view with Steiner's position on human freedom:

"I think that Lewis could never have accepted the idea that man is on the way to becoming a tenth hierarchy - a unique hierarchy of freedom and love. Once, when we were talking about freedom, he made a statement I have never forgotten: 'I was not born to be free - I was born to adore and obey.' I think he was right in describing this as the 'great divide'."

Lewis's emphasis on the creatureliness of humanity complements his Christian view of God

as Lord of Creation. It is not a view in which the Godhead stands in a relationship to the world which can be encompassed in any kind of monism. Nor can it embrace a notion of humanity being the means by which a full expression of the Godhead is actualised.

Our evaluation of Steiner's understanding of God has been qualified by tentativeness and, in addition, it has been stressed that the monism which Steiner advocates is primarily epistemological. But the discussion of epistemology in Steiner (1979) is set inextricably in the context of the relationship of human thought to the cosmos, and hence he insists that his *Philosophy of Freedom* should not be understood as epistemological but rather as a monism of thought. Lewis's (1960) *Miracles* also discusses human thought within a cosmological framework and amounts to a tract against monism, while Steiner's (1979) *Philosophy* is a monist manifesto. Within his monism, 'thought' is not merely an aspect of human cognitive psychology to Steiner but something of cosmic dimensions. And, in relating to 'cosmic thought', the monism of Steiner cannot be divorced from theological questions. Indeed, notwithstanding his repudiation of pantheism, Steiner (1979) explicitly links his 'monism of thought' with a monism which pertains to the understanding of God. In seeking to explore the fuller implications of this theological monism, it is important to re-emphasise the complex and, at times, enigmatic character of much that Steiner writes, especially in this area. If this *caveat* is not observed, it is easy to do an injustice to Steiner's thought by attributing to him positions which he does not maintain. But, on the other hand, it will be argued that his self-professed monism does commit Steiner to views closer to the pantheism or, at least, panentheism, of the affirmative postmodernism described in this thesis, than to Christian Trinitarianism.

Steiner (1979:158) states that, in the monism which he advocates, the concept of purpose is inadmissible "in every sphere with the sole exception of human action". Here we see further grounds for Lewis's charge of anthropocentrism cited earlier: Steiner's *Philosophy of Freedom* celebrates human freedom which "is impossible if anything other than myself (mechanical process or merely inferred extra-mundane God) determines my moral ideas"

(Steiner, 1979:171). Steiner here touches on more than one question of crucial importance in the development of this thesis up to this point. His reference to an "inferred extra-mundane God" may be related, on one side, to the issue of a non-metaphysical theology discussed in Chapter Five. If Steiner were merely to be questioning the construction of a theological system and a concept of God by logical inference, then this might be entirely compatible with the position of Lewis on the elusiveness of the divine Presence, which evades all attempts to pin God down in a theological or philosophical system. It might, furthermore, be compatible with the traditional Christian understanding of divine immanence, in which the principle of the transcendence of God is not permitted to obscure the presence of God in creation. But Lewis's understanding of God, however 'non-metaphysical' in this regard, cannot be squared with the interpretation of Steiner in his rejection of an "extra-mundane" God. It seems that Steiner differs from Lewis in placing the same overwhelming or exclusive emphasis on the immanence of God which has been noted as the characteristic feature of all the representatives of spiritually-oriented postmodernism reviewed in this thesis. In identifying monism as the opposition against which he directs his work, Lewis (1960) wrote from a background which included extensive dialogue with Anthroposophist friends. It is therefore difficult to escape the conclusion that he cannot but have included in his attack the philosophy of Steiner, evident in this statement of his monistic principles:

"Monism finds this divine life, common to all, in reality itself. The ideas of another human being are in substance mine also, and I regard them as different only as long as I perceive, but no longer when I think. ... Hence every man, in his thinking, lays hold of the universal primordial Being which pervades all men. To live in reality, filled with the content of thought, is at the same time to live in God."

(Steiner, 1979:215)

If we accept Steiner's protestations that this is not pantheism (for which we will review further evidence in the following section), it is clear nonetheless that, as with the panentheism of Marcus Borg, Steiner's position is much closer to pantheism than to the orthodox Christian theism defended by Lewis. Steiner's principle of the unity of "every man" with cosmic thought, a unity which is "to live in God", must be taken in conjunction

with his emphatic repudiation of the notion of purpose "in every sphere with the sole exception of human action". For, together, these lead us to appreciate fully his divergence from the concept of a God who does indeed have purposes and who 'does one thing and not another', in the words cited previously from Lewis (1960). Further implications of the different understandings of union with God in Anthroposophy and in Christian tradition represented by Lewis will be explored later in von Balthasar's discussion of the development of Christian thought.

The specifically Anthroposophical doctrine of hierarchies of spiritual beings, alluded to by Harwood (1979), should not divert attention from the commonality between Steiner's ideas and the range of contemporary postmodern spirituality which has been reviewed in this thesis. Steiner may go beyond Griffin, Borg or Tarnas in recognising, like the traditional Christianity of East and West, as well as premodern worldviews in general, the existence of supernatural spiritual beings. Neo-pagan and 'New Age' postmodernisms are also at one with Steiner in this regard (Harvey, 1997; Steyn, 1994). But although the monism implicit in spiritual postmodernism, such as that of Marcus Borg, is not necessarily associated with the existence of supernatural beings, it certainly does not exclude it. As Hinduism demonstrates, a fundamental theological monism can accommodate a pantheon of greater and lesser divine beings, as well as an array of other spirits (Burnett, 1992). But, in a monistic system, the theistic notion of 'creation' is foreign, and thus Lewis's emphasis on creatureliness is critical. It is in pinpointing creatureliness, a feature of special significance to the broad Judaeo-Christian tradition, as opposed to the secondary aspect of freedom which Harwood stresses, that Lewis distinguishes the monistic system advocated by Steiner (eg 1979) from Christian orthodoxy. In doing so, he not only sets his thought apart from Steiner's but also from much, if not all, spiritually-oriented postmodernism. It must also be noted, with regard to the nature of humanity, that both Tarnas's pantheism and Borg's panentheism, are closer to Steiner's position on the essential divinity of human nature, than to that of Lewis on its creatureliness. The God which Borg (1994) can designate as 'the sacred', encompasses all and pervades all but is not in the business of creating human beings

or anything else. For that would signify the reinstatement of the 'supernatural theism' which Borg is as concerned to abandon as Lewis is to maintain, and on which Steiner comments decidedly negatively.

In the attempt to establish the 'postmodernity' of Lewis's thought, his commitment to traditional Christian theism is as much, if not more, a stumbling block in the case of affirmative postmodernism than was noted in the case of 'deconstructive' postmodernism. It is true, as we have seen, that Harwood (1979) can stress the importance of a Trinity of Father, Son and Spirit to Anthroposophy, and also that a reading of Steiner provides some degree of support for his contention of congruence with Christianity. This might, however, equally be taken as evidence of the idiosyncratic nature of Anthroposophical postmodernism as a defence of the postmodern status of Lewis's Christian thought. Thus, in the 'Mystery of Golgotha', Steiner (1995) accords an importance to the being and work of Christ which is no less central than in Christian orthodoxy, even though its essential focus, on thought and consciousness, is quite distinct from the Christian doctrine of the Atonement. Lewis's charge of Arianism against Steiner's understanding of the relationship of the divine Logos to the Godhead is borne out by his description of Christ as "the human bearer of an actual Divine Being" (Steiner, 1995:35). His reference to "this passing of the Godhead through a human body" (Steiner, 1995: 219) might seem to go some way to countering this charge, despite the evident Apollinarianism in Steiner's Christology (Easton, 1975). But an accompanying reference to "the Godhead of whom the Divine-Earthly is also part" would seem to re-emphasise Steiner's pantheistic tendencies. Therefore, for all Steiner's recourse to Christian theological terms and, to some extent, even Christian theological concepts, we come once more to the conclusion that he diverges from the traditional Christian theism upheld by Lewis, very much as Griffin (1989b) and Borg (1997) do in their opposition to 'supernatural theism', and as Tarnas (1996) does in recommending the 'mysterious', pantheistic God of Romanticism over the God of 'orthodoxy'.

8.6 God and the world in Christian thought

Steiner's reference to the 'Divine-Earthly' is strongly suggestive of the divergence from the Christian understanding of the relationship between God and the world which has been dealt with in the course of the previous two chapters. And, as has been noted above, it serves to confirm the impression created by a reading of Steiner's other statements on this question, that, even if it is not accurate to apply the term 'pantheism' to Steiner's view, the tendencies of his monistic thought lean more towards the kind of identification of God and world found in pantheism than to Christian theism. In this section we will consider the exposition by von Balthasar (1997) of the development of the Christian understanding of the separateness of the world from God. It will be shown that this understanding, which relates both to the origin of modern thought and the postmodern attack on it, must be seen in terms of a process of development which occurred within Christian thought. Like von Balthasar, Steiner too takes a developmental view of the nature of thought and, in Steiner's case, this is explicitly associated with his monism and the issue of the relationship of spirit and matter (see eg Steiner, 1956). Given Lewis's role as exponent of Christian tradition, it is important for the purposes of this thesis to explore these issues further, not only because of Lewis's strong opposition to pantheist tendencies (Lewis, 1960) but also the light which may be thrown on the nature of modern and postmodern thought by a comparison of the views of Steiner and von Balthasar. This exploration will relate, in the first place, to possible differences between the Eastern and Western traditions within Christianity on the relationship between God and world, but will proceed to a consideration of Anthroposophy and its relationship to affirmative postmodernism in general. The discussion will touch on Patristic and Eastern Christian theology as well as Western, Scholastic developments. What will be seen to be significant, with regard to the topic of this chapter, is firstly the potential points of contact between Eastern Christianity and Anthroposophy, as well as affirmative postmodernism in general. But, secondly, Scholastic thought will be considered with a view to elucidating Lewis's position *vis-a-vis* postmodern understandings of the divinity of Nature. In this discussion, the role of 'panentheism' in upholding the principle of divine immanence provides a starting point. Following the argument of Frank (1999), we must receive with

caution the implication of Ware (1979), that the Eastern Christian position is distinctly different and in fact spiritually superior to that of the Western theological tradition. Frank demonstrates that, while Byzantine theology may exercise, within the Great Tradition of Christianity, a special charism in its testimony to particular theological principles, these principles must be understood as part of the heritage of Christianity in general. Though certain important perspectives might receive more or less emphasis during particular periods, this does not constitute grounds for a divorce between the traditions of East and West. The tendency to underplay divine immanence in the course of post-medieval Western history (Borg, 1997) is one example of this. It therefore should not be construed as an abandonment of the doctrine by the West, even acknowledging the influence of deism both within and outside of Western Christianity. Frank's position is supported in the discussion of Maloney (1983) and the facility with which (as Maloney notes) members of both traditions are able to draw from the special emphases of the other. Thus the associations of the Eastern Christian tradition with 'negative' postmodernism, described in Chapter Four, and the preference expressed for the term 'panentheism' by both Marcus Borg and Kallistos Ware (for example), cannot be taken as evidence for an absolute divide between Eastern and Western Christianity on issues relating to the postmodern.

However, as Frank (1999) also points out, there is a case to be made for distinguishing Eastern from Western understandings of the relationship of the world to God, not on the grounds of a simple divergence, but in a developmental sense. In this regard, von Balthasar's (1997) discussion of the contribution of Scholasticism to the development of Christian thought, shows how Scholasticism, particularly in the work of St Thomas Aquinas, extended a process of theological development which, in the Patristic period, had seen the explicit formulation of doctrines implicit in New Testament references to God. A similar account of the development of doctrinal and of philosophical-theological positions is provided by Murray (1964). Murray demonstrates the inevitability of such developments, contingent only on the timing of challenges such as that of Arius. His point is that questions of the type raised by Arius (or by others, on further points) were bound to emerge, and thus

serve as stimuli to theological development. However, von Balthasar draws attention to the complicating role of Platonism in this process: underlying the contribution of the Greek Fathers, in the Patristic phase of theological formulation, was the influence of the neo-Platonic notion of participation in the divine. Von Balthasar (1997:373) states that,

"In neo-Platonism the relationship of God and world is most fundamentally conceived according to the schema of 'participation'. The world is essentially *what* participates, while God is what is partaken *of*. Seen from God, God is the one who gives a portion, the One who, as it were, holds his own being from himself but who also externalises himself; and this *egressio* of God from himself *is* itself the world."

Von Balthasar does not claim that the pantheistic tendency arising from this influence found any expression in the formal statements of the Great Councils. Even in the case of Plotinus himself, von Balthasar notes that his views cannot unambiguously be called pantheistic. In passing it should be noted that this supports the tentative position which has been advanced in this chapter on the nature of Steiner's understanding of God, especially in view of the significance attributed to the philosophy of Plotinus in Steiner (1956). With regard to Christian thought, this reservation which is expressed on behalf of Plotinus must be applied all the more to the Patristic use of the schema of participation and 'descent' from the divine. Nevertheless Von Balthasar argues that this aspect of Platonism remained a constant temptation and stumbling block in the articulation of a full Christian understanding of the relationship between God and the world. In this regard it is highly significant that Steiner (1956) is ardent in his advocacy of the contributions of Origen and Dionysius the Areopagite, seeing them as continuing a vital line of spiritual evolution going back through the neo-Platonism of Plotinus. Indeed, what has emerged regarding Steiner's thought in the discussion in this chapter can also be understood in terms of the influence of the Platonic schema of participation in the divine. This is done, though, in the context of a work whose main focus is a highly positive appreciation of Scholastic and particularly Thomist philosophy. The importance accorded by Steiner to Scholastic developments is matched by a similar recognition by von Balthasar, but for very different reasons.

In the case of von Balthasar, his concern is the consequences of the shift in philosophical reliance from Plato to Aristotle, by which Christian theology was able to avoid "even the appearance of a pantheistic emanationism" (von Balthasar, 1997:381). On the other hand, Steiner (1956) deals with Aristotle by emphasising the similarities between his thought and neo-Platonism, rather than the way in which his conception of the world, as worthy in its own right, differs from that of Plato. But Von Balthasar shows how, as a consequence of the Scholastic use of Aristotelianism, the need to think in terms of a 'declension' of the divine substance in the coming-to-be of the world could be relinquished. Instead, in Scholasticism, it could be conceived in terms of "a creation, a generating of an Other" (von Balthasar, 1997:381). Thus Scholasticism permitted the recognition of the self-subsistence of Nature as created being, and von Balthasar (1997:381) can say of Aquinas that he is not only the philosopher of 'secondary causality':

"He is thus also the theologian of 'nature', that is: Nature as that self-subsistence of created being that is *presupposed* before any gracious and unmerited participation in God can take place and in fact is the basis by which this participation can take place"

Von Balthasar continues, making a point which is directly related to the issue of creatureliness which Lewis discerned as the 'great divide' between Anthroposophy and orthodox Christianity:

"This provides theology with a way for expressing a most fundamental fact of the Christian dispensation, that every relationship of the creature to God is to be constructed only on the basis of a mutual otherness that is always more predominant. Furthermore it says that *only* this basis of ever-greater difference suffices to support and make possible the highest unity."

The Scholastic achievement, von Balthasar shows, lies in the freeing of the Christian worldview from the need to understand levels of being, such as "man-animal-plant-matter", as a "progressive alienation from the central fire of life":

"In place of the Great Chain of Being there emerges the rounded, ordered cosmos closed in on itself in which every individual thing possesses its own worth and dignity ... [so that] the direction of God is no longer unambiguously to be understood as moving solely in the direction toward the spirit and away from matter."
(Von Balthasar, 1997:381)

In contrast to von Balthasar, Steiner (1956), in his *Redemption of Thinking: A Study in the Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas*, makes much of the notion of 'the Great Chain of Being' as a feature of Scholasticism. While this would not be allowed by von Balthasar, he does note a residual Platonism in the thought of Aquinas. But this too is seen, contrary to the manner of Steiner, as something which had to be overcome in future philosophical developments within Catholic thought. In the view of von Balthasar, not only did Scholasticism develop beyond the Patristic view of the relationship of Nature to God, but Western Christianity in general also departed thereby from the Eastern Christian tradition's understanding of the world as naturally suffused by the 'rays of divinity' of the immanent, uncreated energies of God (Lossky, 1976). Herein, we must recognise, lies the very basis of the separation of matter and spirit which is so objectionable to postmodernists of the affirmative variety, whether Griffin (1988), Tarnas (1996), Harvey (1997), or Borg (1997), and which is equally depreciated by Maloney (1983) in the admiration which he expresses for the Eastern Christian tradition from the perspective of a Western Catholic. But here, also, is the basis for the view of Lewis, referred to in the previous chapter, that Nature is a fellow creature, not divine, not our Mother but our sister. It is true that Von Balthasar (1997) is at pains to stress that neither Patristic thought nor Eastern Christian thought, which remained in the Patristic mould, overtly or wholeheartedly gave itself to the pantheism lurking in its understanding of creation. Rather, the pantheistic tendencies, inherent in their Platonic philosophical grounding, remained as a constant temptation to fall away from the Christian heritage, of the dignity and worth of creation and of matter, in Docetic or Monophysite directions. Thus, von Balthasar points out, there was a continuing potential to misunderstand the Incarnation as a transition to a purely spiritual condition. Similarly, given the underlying Platonic interpretative schema, the positive value which, for example, Maloney (1983) perceives in Eastern Christianity's non-separation of spirit and matter, is

double-edged. On von Balthasar's view it is always open to the possibility that, instead of the appreciation of the material being enhanced by its association with spirit, it may be devalued, as matter is subordinated or assimilated to spirit.

In Chapter Four much was made of Lewis's connection with Eastern Christianity but, as is made clear by Frank (1999), a positive appreciation for special emphases within the Eastern tradition does not necessarily entail an uncritical acceptance of all other elements within it. Conversely, despite Lewis's aversion to Scholasticism reported by Griffiths (1979), this did not extend to all its aspects, as is evident in his treatment of reason (Lewis, 1960). There are indeed considerable positive grounds for believing that Lewis's view of creation, Nature and matter, lay very much in the line of development initiated by Scholasticism. The de-divinising understanding of Nature, summed up in the metaphor of sister rather than Mother, is evident throughout his thought on the subject. Although Lewis's reference, in such comments, is always to non-Christian religions and not to Eastern Christianity, it is linked with Lewis's constant presupposition of the separation of the Uncreated from creation (see eg Lewis, 1960) on which von Balthasar focuses. As von Balthasar shows with regard to Scholasticism, though, this does not have to imply the near-absolute separation, towards which Western thought moved in deism: there is "*de facto* interpenetration" despite "the material separation of nature and supernature" (von Balthasar, 1997:383): Lewis (1960), too, makes use of this notion of the interpenetration of materially separate realities. But, the separation serves as the basis from which to proceed to a higher unity: with regard to the gracious elevation of humanity to participation in the divine nature, von Balthasar (1997:381) observes that "the unity simply could not be closer, no matter how much we separate and divide for the purposes of analysis". This dual separation and unity is the focus of attention in both the philosophical and the imaginative works of Lewis. But, while von Balthasar (1997) refers, in his comments on the union of spirit and matter, largely to the divinisation of humanity, Lewis's focus is much broader. In his fantasy of heaven and hell, Lewis (1972) vividly portrays the closeness of the unity of matter and spirit, nature and grace, in the imagery of the regenerated 'New Creation'. This is not only a portrayal of the

participation of redeemed humanity in the divine nature, but incorporates the Pauline vision of creation also sharing in the "glorious liberty of the children of God". Lewis is very careful to present his picture as a mere dream, so as not to invest it with an unwarranted authority, but a few examples suffice to demonstrate the theological principles which are clearly evident in this work: the matter of the bodies of those visiting the fringes of heaven is like mist or smoke against the solidity of the New Creation; the tread of the 'bright spirits', who come to meet them, makes the ground tremble beneath their feet; and a great waterfall, which is part of the beautiful country of renewed Nature, embodies an angel who speaks with a thunderous voice. Here is no purely 'spiritual' salvation but, rather, matter and spirit are interpenetrated, and matter is transfigured by spirit into enhanced reality. The premodern vision of the world, as being alive with the numinous (Frankfort et al, 1949) is thus actualised in the redemption of Nature. However, Lewis does not allow even that the present world is bereft of spirit.

In *Miracles*, his study of the relationship between Nature and Supernature, Lewis (1960), like von Balthasar, emphasises the character of Nature as a relatively closed, self-contained system, which is nevertheless open to the effects of Supernature acting on it. Even the human capacity for rationality involves the interpenetration of Nature by Supernature: human minds are 'orifices' in the smooth face of nature, by which the supercosmic *Logos* lends the power of reason to what would otherwise be merely highly developed animals. As in von Balthasar's account (1997:383) of the Scholastic theology of Nature, Lewis is opposed to "rending the being of the world into two 'storeys' that never communicate". Lewis deals with the problem of miracles inherent in a modern worldview: even where the modern mind allows the existence of Supernature, it cannot countenance traffic between Nature and Supernature of the kind demanded by the miraculous, and it is inclined to dispense altogether with the possibility of the miraculous, on the *a priori* basis of a single, material reality. Equally, though, we must note that the concept of the miraculous is redundant within a monistic, spirit-matter worldview such as that espoused by Tarnas (1996), Harvey (1997), Borg (1997), and other protagonists of affirmative postmodernism.

of them will be dealt with: Marcus J Borg, Distinguished Professor of Religion and Culture at Oregon State University, and author of two best selling books re-evaluating Christian ideas on Jesus and God; Daphne Hampson, of the theological faculty of St Andrew's University, Scotland, and author of *Theology and Feminism* (1990) in the Blackwell 'Signposts in Theology' series; and Rosemary Radford Ruether, much-quoted as a feminist writer, and author (amongst others) of *Gaia and God: Towards an Eco-feminist Theology of Earth-Healing* (1992).

Borg (1994; 1997) sets his discussion of spirituality and the nature of God explicitly within the context of postmodernity and the inadequacies of 'Enlightenment' thought. For example, he states that,

"The modern worldview, derived from the Enlightenment, sees reality in material terms, as constituted by the world of matter, within the space-time continuum. The experience of spirit persons suggests that there is more to reality than this - that there is, in addition to the tangible world of our ordinary experience, a nonmaterial level of reality, actual though nonmaterial, and charged with energy and power."

(Borg, 1994:33-34)

Borg's reference to 'spirit persons', amongst whom he includes shamans in general as well as Jesus, relates also to his own personal experiences of what he identifies as 'nature mysticism', and to his belief that such experiences are available to those who are open to,

"the sacred at the centre of existence, the holy mystery that is all around us and within us ... the nonmaterial ground and source and presence in which ... 'we live and move and have our being'."

(Borg, 1994:14)

This 'ground and source and presence', the all pervasive holy mystery, is identified by Borg as God. Like David Ray Griffin, whose name is associated with the SUNY 'Constructive Postmodernism' series, and to whom Borg refers several times, Borg repudiates 'supernatural theism'. Borg (1997) notes that the emphasis on divine immanence, which he seeks to uphold, is a well-established element within the broad Christian tradition although, in the modern era, the elevation of belief in the transcendence of God led to the general loss of the

essential elements of ancient paganism. But if, on these accounts, we take Anthroposophy to be a specially apt representative of affirmative postmodernism in our evaluation of Lewis, we must nevertheless still return to the question of the comparison of Steiner's with von Balthasar's views on Scholasticism. Like von Balthasar, Steiner places great emphasis on the pivotal role of Scholasticism in the development of modern thought. Also like von Balthasar, for Steiner the spirit-matter question is central to the part played by Scholasticism, but the interpretation which he puts on this development is somewhat different.

In tracing the development of human cognition, Steiner (1956) describes the pre-medieval understanding of the world as one in which spirit and matter are not differentiated at the perceptual level. Two points need to be underlined with regard to this statement: firstly, it is not merely 'primitive' societies to which Steiner attributes this mode of perception; and, secondly, it is literally a perception of 'extra-sensible realities' to which Steiner refers. With regard to the latter point, Anthroposophy, like the postmodernism of Graham Harvey's Neo-paganism or Marcus Borg's mysticism of the immanent 'Sacred', upholds a strongly realistic view of the spiritual. But in contrast to the idea of spirit in Harvey, and perhaps in Borg also, as a kind of formless substance accompanying or inherent in matter, to Steiner extra-sensible, spiritual perceptions have real spiritual forms and objects as their content. However, in comparison with that of Harvey and Borg, this is a more definitely *post*-modern spirituality: the backwards-looking 'revivalist' nature of Neo-paganism is clearly evident and, even in Borg, although there is not the same, conscious archaising motivation, his recourse to the idea of shamanism in presenting his spirituality is suggestive of a similar approach. In Steiner's evolutionary scheme the original faculty of supersensible perception, by which the joint exercise of sensory and extra-sensible perception results in actually *seeing* the spiritual-material reality of the world, is frankly regarded as an archaic condition of consciousness. But, though archaic, it is a mode of perception which Steiner (1956) describes as surviving into classical Western civilisation, and classical philosophy:

"It is in regard to this attitude towards matter and spirit that we entirely misunderstand Greek philosophy. When the Greeks speak of ideas, of concepts - when Plato speaks of them - men of today think that Plato or the Greeks give much the same meaning to 'ideas' as we do ourselves. But this is not so, for the Greeks spoke of ideas as of something which they *perceived in the outer world*, just as they spoke of colours or sounds as percepts. The Greek *sees* the idea, just as he sees colours."
(Steiner, 1956:33)

Steiner views the neo-Platonism of Plotinus as standing at the end of this phase of human consciousness, and shows how, for him, humanity lives in a spiritual world, of which it can be said that "the immediate revelation of this spiritual world - what we see as its nether boundary - is concepts" (Steiner, 1956:37). In Chapter Four, it is very much this understanding which is referred to in the discussion of the contemplation of Nature in the Eastern Christian tradition, confirming what both von Balthasar and Steiner state on the place of neo-Platonism in pre-Scholastic thought. This is as vital from Steiner's perspective, as much as from that of von Balthasar, to the understanding of the transition to modern thought which occurred in the Middle Ages. Steiner (1956) identifies St Augustine as standing with one foot in the past while at the same time giving expression to the first dawn of the new era. The shift to sensory empiricism in Scholasticism is the substance of this change but Steiner identifies the emergence of the individual, first apparent in Augustine, as the key to the change in modes of perception and knowing. Because Augustine "lived in advance of his age" and therefore "had not the necessary outlook", he could not accept like Plotinus that "the whole world is spiritual, and the things of the senses do not, merely as such, exist". To this Steiner (1956:41) adds the comment:

"For what appears as material is only the lowest method of revealing the spiritual. All is spirit, and if only we penetrate deeply enough into reality, everything is revealed as spirit"

While human beings remain relatively undifferentiated in their oneness with the world, as well as within human community (in what Steiner refers to as 'group soul'), so their perceptions of matter and spirit remain undifferentiated. But, according to Steiner, with the rise of individuality, the faculties of spiritual perception tended to atrophy so that the

individual human being came to have to rely solely on sensory perception of the material aspect of reality as the means of arriving at a knowledge of the world. This can be related to the discussion of Steiner's monism earlier in this chapter: the original state of humanity is one of unity with the cosmic whole and therefore human beings are open to the spirituality which pervades the whole. In rising to individual consciousness, human beings are thereby cut off, not only from the immersion in group consciousness, or 'group soul', but also from cosmic consciousness. Steiner (1956:68) explains how, with the achievement of the consciousness of individuality, it was inevitable that it then should be felt that "it is in *man himself* [*sic*] that the thoughts arise whereby he gains an inward representation of the outer world". However, to Steiner, this change in the mode of cognition does not alter the reality that all thought is derived from cosmic thought, and nor does it touch the continuing reality of the spirit-matter unity. The development of individual consciousness, despite it being an advance in spiritual evolution (or the evolution of consciousness), gives rise to an *illusory dualism in which the contents of the individual's thought are understood to be entirely separate from the world which they represent*. In this understanding, thought stands to world as model to reality. But the main thrust of the argument of Steiner (1979) is that the organisation of the impressions of perception into the concepts of thought is dependent on the rootedness of the individual mind in universal thought, which pervades the cosmos. Steiner (1956:33, n.1) states with reference to a paper he had presented on monism:

"In this I laid stress upon the fact that the crude dualistic conception, 'matter and spirit', is really a creation of the most recent times ... Then I indicated how this dualism is opposed by Scholastic Monism ... [which was] marked by a unified (monistic) constitution, stretching from the Godhead and the divine to the details of nature."

We see here the continuing neo-Platonic cast which Steiner attributes to Scholastic thought. It is on this account that Steiner sees Scholasticism, by which he refers primarily to the work of Albertus Magnus and, especially, Thomas Aquinas, as a crucial link in the development of thought. This is not simply, as argued earlier in this thesis, because Scholasticism is the precursor of modernity but because, to Steiner, it stands at the transition from the old to the

new in the development of thought: on the one hand, the Scholastics refused to regard concepts merely as constructions of the individual, serving as an artifice to describe the world but, on the other, with the rise of individual consciousness, they no longer *saw* the universal, supersensible realities by which concepts live. Having risen to the state in which their mode of perception was severed from the direct apprehension of the spiritual side of spiritual-material reality, they nevertheless held to the understanding that these realities existed. Thus, on Steiner's account, the contemplation of Nature as a means to perceiving spiritual realities, which was retained in the Eastern Christian tradition, was no longer a possibility in the wake of the development of Scholasticism in the West. On the other hand, though, the monism which Steiner attributes to Scholasticism was (in his view) committed to the principle of unity, not simply of spirit and matter, but of thought and world. According to Steiner (1956), this meant that post-Scholastic thought remained open to a further development in the evolution of consciousness in which the rational thought of Scholasticism could be complemented, in a higher synthesis, by the development of higher faculties of spiritual perception. Despite the dualistic trend of the mainstream of modern Western thought, this possibility remained, and has actually been achieved in Anthroposophy,

On Steiner's view, the crucial false step, taken by those who followed in the trail blazed by the great Scholastics, was to deny the link between the individual thought of the human mind and the universal thought of the cosmos. In the Middle Ages this development expressed itself in the philosophy of Nominalism, but in the modern age, to which Steiner addresses his *Philosophy of Freedom*, it expressed itself in the subjectivism flowing from Kant's epistemology. We might add also, that Steiner would have no trouble in seeing postmodern scepticism as merely a further expression of this same development. But in each case the problem is one of the cleavage which is understood to exist between the world which is known and the thought by which it is known, that is, the dualism against which he directs himself in his *Philosophy*, and which Steiner (1979:89) refers to as the 'two-world theory'. With regard to this he argues that it,

"does not assume just that there are two sides of a single reality which are kept apart merely by our [mental] organisation, but that there are two worlds absolutely distinct from each other. It then tries to find in one of these two worlds the principles for the explanation of the other".

Once again, we must note that Steiner is not merely stating an epistemological principle here: for him the world of thought must be understood in terms of spiritual realism. It is not that Steiner believes that the mental world, as understood in terms of modern dualism, possesses an independent 'spiritual' reality of its own - for him the whole problem with modern thought is that the 'second world' cannot have a reality of its own, not even as the type of cognitive construction or mental model of reality, imagined by its advocates. The spiritual realism accorded to thought, in Steiner's monism, must be understood in terms of a spirit-matter unity, or a unity of matter and mentality, somewhat like that described previously in the views of Rosemary Ruether and Richard Tarnas. There, consciousness is an inherent quality of the world, and matter and spirit (conceived primarily in relation to consciousness) are complementary aspects of a single reality. According to Steiner the unity of that single reality is only broken in the mental activity of the dualistic consciousness which, as we have seen, emerged in the wake of Scholasticism. When Steiner (1956) presents Anthroposophy as the continuation of Scholasticism in the twentieth century, he bases his claim on the monism which he perceives in Scholasticism, in which, although it was no longer perceived, in the direct manner of antiquity, yet it was believed that all being was one, stretching up through the Great Chain of Being to the Godhead itself. But (to Steiner) the separation of spirit and matter which occurred in the perception, although not the belief of the Scholastics, is a step to the achievement of unity at a higher level of the development of consciousness. What is achieved in Anthroposophy, according to Steiner, is the realisation of the unity of spirit and matter, of world and thought, at a higher level: the perception of separation now being overcome by the direct apprehension of the actual unity of all things through the development of higher, supersensory faculties. But the consciousness of individuality which, according to Steiner (1956), began first to emerge in St Augustine before flowering in the Scholastics, is not lost in the achievement of this re-integration. Instead, the awakened consciousness is able to enjoy the freedom of its own

individuality *together with* the direct experience of the unity of all being, which is, for Steiner, a unity in God. In contrast to union with the Great Mother in the scheme of Tarnas (1996), though, this does not imply ego-dissolution. Thus Steiner's position must be seen as distinct from that developed by Tarnas, in partial reliance on Steiner for the epistemological monism which Tarnas found there. But how, then, does this position of Steiner relate to the Christian understanding of von Balthasar, and thus also of Lewis?

8.8 Unity of matter and spirit in Christianity and Anthroposophy

As we have seen, the endpoint for von Balthasar (1997), as for Lewis also (see Lewis, 1955), is union of the human soul with God. Like Steiner, and unlike the affirmative postmodernism of Tarnas, this Christian understanding emphatically preserves the individuality of personality (ego, in Steiner's terms) within the appreciation of unity. To Steiner, though, this is what can be termed a natural unity - for in a monistic system there can only be one Nature, which is both spiritual and physical. And, furthermore, all things, spiritual and physical, are in God and God in all things (Steiner, 1947; 1979). But in the Christian view, that is particularly the *Western* Christian view, union with God is achieved as something which comes from outside Nature, by grace. The reason for the emphasis laid on this being the Western Christian view is made amply clear if von Balthasar's understanding of divinisation is compared with the Eastern Christian exposition found, for example, in Lossky (1976). The Jesuit Maloney (1983), in his *Pilgrimage of the Heart: A Treasury of Eastern Christian Spirituality*, lauds the relative lack of separation between spirit and matter in the Christian East. But this is associated with a 'natural' understanding of divinisation which is interpretable, following von Balthasar, as a consequence of the failure to distinguish properly between God and creation, which flows from the continuing influence in Eastern Christianity of a Neo-Platonic conception of the relationship of God to the world. Although Maloney (1983:1) bemoans the "Augustinian Platonism that has cluttered up Western Christianity with an un-Christian separation of nature and supernature", on von Balthasar's account it would seem rather that this "separation of nature and supernature" must be understood as the victory of Scholasticism over Platonism in the

West. Indeed, to Von Balthasar this is an incomplete victory inasmuch as he identifies continuing influences of Platonism in the thought of Aquinas, only fully overcome in Neo-Thomism. The unequivocal employment of the categories of Nature and Supernature by Lewis (1960), in his polemic against monism, places him firmly on the side of Von Balthasar, but this should not be seen primarily as placing him in conflict with the Eastern Christian worldview. Even von Balthasar's discussion portrays the East not so much as standing in opposition to the West, as retaining an archaism within a tradition which is shared in common between them. The situation in relation to Steiner's thought is somewhat different, however.

To Steiner (1956) it is not the case that the Neo-Platonic view of the unity of the spiritual and material is to be overcome because it is false. Rather, the perception of the unity of all things must be revalidated at a higher level of the development of consciousness and thought. In contrast, in the argument of von Balthasar (1997), the development of thought leads to an appreciation of the self-subsistence of matter and Nature in a 'dualism' between creation and God which, we have seen, is summed up in the vision of Julian of Norwich. On this view, modern epistemological dualism is understood, just as much as in Steiner's case, as a perversion of a valid development of thought. However, if we follow the implications of the Christian view of von Balthasar to their conclusion, modern dualism is not to be overcome by a reversion to monism, or even by a resolution of dualism with monism on a higher level, but rather by the recognition that humanity cannot claim for itself the 'metaphysically privileged position' which is the target of sceptical postmodernism. The vision of Lady Julian, of 'everything that is made' as a little thing like a hazelnut in the palm of the hand, is something granted by God, and not to be adopted as an axiomatic assumption as it was in modern thought. The perversion of thought comes, on this view, when humanity presumes to set itself up as 'the measure of all things', and assumes it can occupy a position by natural right which had hitherto been contingent on God. But, for Steiner, the false move involves the very notion of the self-subsistence of Nature and matter, and its separateness from God. Steiner (1979:215-6) refers to the misunderstanding "of those who believe that

this world cannot have the foundation of its existence in itself " and who therefore assume the existence of a God who "is nothing but a human being transplanted into the Beyond". Steiner makes it absolutely clear that there is no 'Beyond', so that the sense in which he speaks of the world as having "the foundation of its existence within itself" differs radically from the way in which this would be interpreted in terms of the self-subsistence of Nature described by von Balthasar. This difference is rooted in the understanding of God, as standing either in an essentially immanent or transcendent relation to Nature. There is therefore a crucial difference in the interpretations of the achievement of Scholasticism provided by Steiner and von Balthasar: the one represents Scholasticism as retaining the archaic monism of spirit and matter in principle even though perceiving the material world apart from the spiritual; to the other Scholasticism represents the critical step in breaking free of the lingering influence of Neo-Platonic monism. The primary issue, though, is the different understandings of the nature of God, of which the notions of the unity of the world with God, in Anthroposophy, and the self-subsistence of nature, in Western Christianity, are the respective corollaries.

In view of the primary importance of the understanding of God, it is essential to this discussion that Steiner's position should be made as clear as possible. In *Christianity as Mystical Fact*, Steiner (1947) alludes repeatedly to Christ as Son of God, the divine *Logos*, brought forth as "the basis of the universe" by God the Father, who is "super-existent Divinity" (Steiner, 1947:170). But the assertion of God's 'super-existence' is made in a *qualified manner* by Steiner:

"What man perceives with his senses he calls existent; what he does not thus perceive he calls non-existent. If, therefore, he wishes to open up an actual view of the Divine he must rise up above existence and non-existence, for these also, as he conceives them, have their origin in the sphere of the senses. In this sense God is neither existent nor non-existent; He is super-existent. Consequently He cannot be reached by means of ordinary cognition which has to do with existing things. We must be raised above ourselves, above our sense observations, above our reasoning logic, if we are to find the way to spiritual vision. Thence we are able to get a glimpse into the perspectives of the Divine."

The 'super-existent' God is to be found within the world by the exercise of human faculties, although these are higher, supersensible faculties of cognition. Indeed, this is the only way God is to be known for,

"monism denies all justification to metaphysics, which merely draws inferences ... [and thus] monism does not see, behind man's actions, the purposes of a supreme directorate, foreign to him and determining him according to its will .."
(Steiner, 1979:150)

Although his writings on the nature of God may be too allusive (see eg Steiner, 1947) to counter definitively and although, in Chapter Four, we have noted aspects within the Christian tradition which parallel some of what Steiner writes, the balance of these kinds of comment seems strongly to suggest that Steiner's monism implies a concept of 'God the Father' which is incompatible with that of the Christian tradition, both Eastern and Western. That concept would seem, as already suggested, to be closer to (even if not identical with) that of the 'Great Mother' in the scheme of Tarnas (1996), in which humanity plays a key role, by wakening to full consciousness the immanent thought of the essentially divine universe. This would seem to be implied in the reference of Steiner (1947:33) to the hidden, eternal Father-God himself, of whom it can be said that, at earlier stages in the evolution of thought, "that Father slumbers under a spell". Certainly, when Barfield (1966:219) refers, in his exposition of Steiner's thought on Jesus, to "the Father force, the preserved residue at it were of man's divine heritage", he speaks in terms foreign to the personalism of the understanding of God in the Christian tradition. And that understanding presupposes a clear distinction of Nature from God as Creator and Lord of Nature, including humanity, which is plainly unacceptable in terms of the monism of Steiner. Thus we are brought back to the observation of Lewis (in Harwood, 1979) that the fundamental division between Christianity and Anthroposophy lay in the inability of the latter to affirm belief in 'God the Father Almighty'. To this we may add, that the rider to this statement in the Apostle's Creed, 'Maker of heaven and earth', is also incompatible with Anthroposophical monism.

The complaint of Maloney (1983) about the separation of spirit and matter in the thought of Western Christianity represents a characteristic concern of affirmative postmodernism as we have seen. Despite our references to the atypical quality of Anthroposophy, this unity of spirit and matter in Steiner's monism is very typical of affirmative postmodernism. Contrary to Maloney's opinion, though, we have seen how Von Balthasar views the understanding of the self-subsistence of matter, and hence its separation from spirit, as the great achievement of Scholasticism. The Scholastic contribution permits the full development and appreciation of the Christian doctrine of creation whereby God can be conceived of as bringing into being something which exists in its own right and is not merely an emanation of the divine substance. Von Balthasar (1997) acknowledges the problematic nature of the developments in Western thought which proceeded from this notion of the relative autonomy of Nature in the modern period. But if Scholastic thought was open to corruption this is not, for von Balthasar, any indication that it was unworthy in itself. And if the weight of opinion of affirmative postmodernism is against the 'dualism' of the Nature-Supernature divide which Scholastic thought upholds, then neither is this in itself proof that a Christian worldview is thereby any less viable in a postmodern era than any other affirmative postmodernism. Steiner (1979:214) is primarily attacking metaphysical constructions of inferred knowledge when he writes,

"Monism does ... give man the conviction that he lives in the world of reality and has no need to look beyond the world for a higher reality that can never be experienced. It refrains from seeking absolute reality anywhere else but in experience, because it is just in the content of experience that it recognises reality. ... What dualism seeks only beyond the observed world, monism finds in this world itself."

As previously argued, it seems difficult to avoid the conclusion that Steiner's monism would not be able to countenance any belief whatsoever in a realm of Supernature not directly identifiable with the world of experience (or at least the potential experience of awakened consciousness). But to argue against the possibility of the existence of such a realm, or that it might be able to exert effects on the world of nature, would, to follow the argument cited from Hart (1989) in Chapter Four, be as metaphysical as the philosophies which Steiner

attacks. Thus, even if it is discounted in practice, it is problematic to deny in principle, as Steiner's thought does, the self-subsistence of created nature, which is the corollary of the separate reality of uncreated Supernature. This position, seemingly as uncongenial to the thought of Steiner as to postmodern thought in general, but so strongly asserted by Lewis (1960), is the background to all the features of Lewis's thought which have been noted in Chapters Five and Seven as being in accord with the postmodern.

In the developments of intellectual history subsequent to the Middle Ages, the notion of the divide between Creator and creation led to the emergence of the modern thought, whose problematic character is underlined by Steiner as much as it is in the account of modern and postmodern thought provided in the review of the 'end of modernity' by Snyder (1988). It is part of the argument of this thesis that, although it might be implicated in the development of modern thought, the Scholastic achievement which von Balthasar highlights cannot simply be written off as one of the aspects of the 'malaise of modernity'. As we have noted above, it is the background to all the elements of affinity with the postmodern in the thought of Lewis. The separation of matter and spirit is, however, not an absolute in the thought of Lewis. In Lewis's imaginative portrayals of the New Creation, in *The Great Divorce* (Lewis, 1972) and in *The Last Battle* (Lewis, 1964d), although they might be classed with the metaphysical 'Beyond' which is scathingly described by Steiner (1979), Lewis envisages a unity of matter and spirit. As in the thought of Steiner this is connected with union with God, but the nature of this union is radically different in the thought of Steiner and Lewis. To Steiner it is a realisation, although needing to be effected at a higher level, of a primordial unity. To Lewis, whose thought here is fully in accord with Christian tradition on the divinisation of humanity and creation, it is a development which lies beyond the capacity of Nature herself and is, from the perspective of Nature, something novel. This, we have seen, is what is outlined by von Balthasar (1997) too. But, if the reconciliation of matter and spirit is placed beyond Nature herself by both Lewis and von Balthasar, there is another kind of reconciliation, different aspects of which are represented in Lewis and von Balthasar, and which may be related to the thought of Steiner. This reconciliation pertains

to an holistic understanding of the human person which contrasts with the 'Enlightenment' emphasis on the rational intellect to the exclusion of other aspects of human nature.

8.9 Alternative modes of being postmodern

We have noted how Tarnas (1996), in the exposition of his participatory epistemology, emphasises not only the holism of the human observer's participation in the world, but also the full participation of the human nature of the observer. In contrast with the disembodied rational intellect which is foundational to the 'Enlightenment worldview, this participation involves body and mind, including the full range of faculties, imaginative and intuitive amongst them. This kind of holism is presupposed in Steiner's thought also, and is particularly evident in his works on education and childhood (eg Steiner, 1968; 1969; 1995). The principle of 'educating the whole child' is a familiar one in the child-centred, 'progressive education' movement which looks to Rousseau as its originator (Kelly, 1987). But Steiner's approach in Waldorf Education has a holism which extends beyond the merely naturalistic holism of 'progressive education'. It is significant that Rousseau's educational ideas are associated with his Romanticism (Kelly, 1987). In this regard we must note the statement of Barfield (1966:14) that Anthroposophy is "nothing less than Romanticism grown up" as well as Tarnas's (1996) description of the way in which Romanticism brought, to a modernity dominated by arid rationalism, not only an emphasis on qualities such as feeling, will and imagination, but also a renewed concern with the spiritual. Heath & Boreham (1999) conclude their introductory account of Romanticism with a section headed 'Recurring Romanticism', the final sentence of which reads:

"Perhaps a new Romanticism will provide us with a way out of the impasse of postmodernism" (Heath & Boreham, 1999:172).

This conclusion is in fact developed by Tarnas in the presentation of his own affirmative postmodernism but, in its own right, the 'grown up Romanticism' of Steiner can equally be regarded as an answer to the 'end of modernity'. Like Steiner, though, Lewis has Romantic affinities which express themselves in a concern for the reconciliation of elements divided

by Enlightenment thought. The balancing of reason by imagination, dealt with in Chapter Five, is a prime instance of this, and Smith (1998) points out that Lewis's reference to imagination as the 'organ of meaning', in contrast with reason as the 'organ of truth', is derived from the Romanticism of Wordsworth. Romanticism figures largely in *Surprised by Joy*, (Lewis, 1959) and his *Pilgrim's Regress* (Lewis, 1977) is subtitled *An Allegorical Apology for Christianity, Reason and Romanticism*. In a preface written after the original work, Lewis qualifies his use of the term 'Romanticism' to describe his concern with 'Joy' in his pilgrimage, but this does not detract from the 'romantic' holism of his thought. His reservations about Romanticism are expressed in his preface to his anthology of extracts from the writings of George MacDonald (Lewis ed, 1983) but he notes how the Christianity of the Romantic MacDonald manages to neutralise the negative influences of Romanticism while retaining what was of value. In 'Christianity and culture' (Lewis, 1981i) he identifies eroticism and occultism as amongst those negative influences in his personal experience, and in his essay on 'Equality', in what appears to be a reference to the Fascist glorification of inequality, he warns against a recurrence of Romantic tendencies in politics. But these pitfalls of Romanticism are perversions of good elements within it: eroticism and occultism represent temptations attending the quest for joy which will be shown later in this thesis to be a signpost to the experience of God in Lewis's thought; and Fascism involves a distortion of the celebration of inherent inequality which Lewis sees as the essential counterpart to the valid principle of formal legal and political equality in modern democracy. Smith (1998:359) comments, with reference to Lewis's negative experiences of Romanticism:

"On the other hand, he attributed this to his abuse of these experiences, since they also contained much that was good and that led to his conversion."

In some ways Lewis's incorporation of Romantic elements in his Christian thought might be compared with the use of the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle in earlier developments in the Christian tradition. The marks of his Christian Romanticism are evident even in his popular apologetic work (Lewis, 1955) where, for example, he refers his audience to the wistfulness of unidentifiable desire, which comes unbidden in the midst of this life at its

most fulfilled, and which represents the call of 'another country', the true homeland of the human soul. In the breadth of his thought it is clear that Lewis had engaged fully with the issues of Romanticism and, while Barfield could title his work on Steiner's thought *Romanticism Comes of Age*, it can at least be claimed for Lewis that he incorporated the valid elements of Romanticism in his role of exponent of Christian tradition. Like Steiner, although in a somewhat different way, Lewis makes use of the resources of Romanticism in providing what may be recognised, decades later, as an alternative mode of being postmodern. But, from the Christian tradition both Eastern and Western, Lewis drew on resources, other than Romanticism, which we have seen to be vital in contributing to that postmodernism.

In view of what has been said concerning the Scholastic origins of modern thought, and (in Chapter Four) the issue of the rational intellect versus love, the comment of Gaybba (1998:1) is most illuminating:

[Latin theology in the middle ages] "took on an intellectual objectivity and subjected itself to the rigours of academic discourse that meant abandoning the more traditional patristic approach, one that flowered into what has come to be known as monastic theology and which was doomed to be replaced soon after its zenith by what has become known as scholastic theology. The difference between the two was the difference between a way of theologising that put a premium on symbolism, spiritual experience and - above all - love as the route to understanding, over against one that concentrated on the literal, the conceptual and - above all - rational argumentation as the route to understanding. However, it would be wrong to imagine that the rationally orientated scholastic form of theology disregarded the importance of symbolism, spiritual experience and love as routes of understanding. The importance of these factors was recognised - but for the individual believer's own life of faith."

In a sense very different from Steiner's portrayal of Scholasticism we see the crucial position it held in the intellectual development of the West and in the origins of modern thought which, in the light of the discussion in this thesis, might be regarded as a heresy of Scholasticism. The fatal break in Western thought occurred with the breakdown of the Scholastic synthesis of faith and reason achieved by St Thomas Aquinas (Fremantle, 1954). The circumscribed rationalism of Scholastic thought, now liberated from its spiritual

moorings in the whole life and love of reasoning human beings, became transformed into the autonomous rationality of the modern humanist ideal. As we have already noted, von Balthasar (1997) makes the point that the negative consequences which flowed from the breakdown of the Scholastic achievement, cannot be held to the account of Scholasticism. Those negative consequences, apart from the often anti-Christian thought of the 'Enlightenment', have also been felt within Western Christianity. Von Balthasar (1989), in a chapter on 'Theology and Sanctity', shows how theology and spirituality diverged after Thomas Aquinas, the last great figure in the history of the Western Church to be both a saint and a theologian. Lossky's exposition of the unity of theology and spiritual experience as the expected norm of the Eastern Churches is also applicable to the West prior to the late Middle Ages but thereafter a split occurs which can be characterised in terms of the sundering of the head from the heart. Scholastic thought had established theology as an independent activity of the intellect but one which was still to be pursued by those whose intellects were guided and formed by the life of love and faith. But, with the decline of Scholasticism, experience became alienated from theology which was conducted as an intellectual activity separate from the experience of the realities which, as Lossky (1976) stresses, theology is supposed to express.

The alienation of theology from the spiritual life, in the Church in the modern age, paralleled a wider intellectual malaise in modernity to which the prophetic insight of Nietzsche was directed. In the latter part of the twentieth century the attack on modern thought was redoubled by those who followed in the tradition of Nietzsche's thought, but in Chapter Four we have seen how, for example, the views of Foucault on knowledge/power are paralleled in the teaching of St Maximus the Confessor on the relationship of knowledge, reason and passion. CS Lewis, as heir of the broad Christian tradition, and as one who explicitly taught the need to balance the flawed understandings of the modern age with the voices of other ages (equally flawed, but in other directions), addresses the modern age with more than just the benefits of the Romantic heritage to equip him for this task. And, while Steiner saw his own task as pointing to the further evolution of the

development of thought which had been achieved in Scholasticism, the consequences of Scholastic developments must be taken equally seriously by those who seek to stand within the broad tradition of 'Mere Christianity' and address an era of postmodernism. The appreciation of the issues involved differ widely between the Anthroposophical and Christian perspectives, but can it be asserted that, within the Christian tradition, resources exist for a mode of being postmodern, one which is different from those recognised within either 'deconstructive' or affirmative postmodernism? In this chapter claims of this nature have been made for the thought of Rudolf Steiner. What then may we conclude about the relationship of the thought of Lewis to that of Steiner and to postmodernism?

Enough evidence has been provided in the course of the discussion in this chapter to show that there is a strong case to be made for the claim that Steiner, like Lewis but in his own way, had addressed the flaws in modern thought targeted subsequently by the 'deconstructive' postmodernism of the later twentieth century. For example, Steiner's (1979) 'participatory epistemology' is specifically directed against the very premises of modern thought which Snyder (1988) identifies as problematic. However, Steiner's affirmation of rationality stands in clear contrast to the postmodern attack on reason although, on the other hand, the rationality which Steiner upholds must be understood as rooted in immanent universal thought and not based on the 'Enlightenment' premise of the inherent rationality of the autonomous human individual. Steiner's views on thought are nevertheless atypical of postmodernism, as is his seemingly Christian theological understanding - even in relation to those variants of affirmative postmodernism which do (unlike that of Cupitt) support a concept of God. But, as we have seen, on further consideration it is apparent that despite Steiner's Trinitarian terminology, as well as the complexity of his theological ideas in comparison with other understandings of God in affirmative postmodernism, his monism places him with them and against orthodox Christian theology. With regard to CS Lewis, we have seen in this chapter that his position is incongruent, on several accounts, with even the atypical postmodernism of Anthroposophy. However, it has been argued in Chapters Five and Seven that there is a postmodern quality to his views on numerous issues, such as

the 'elusiveness of God', the relation of reason to myth, the inadmissibility of a theory of knowledge premised on the individual rational subject and, specifically in relation to affirmative postmodernism, his view of the archetypal nature of reality and the 'symbolic universe'. With regard to Anthroposophy, which we have argued may still be regarded as a variant of affirmative postmodernism, Lewis did not find himself able to accede to the claims of Steiner's thought, despite some points of contact. It has not been the intention in this chapter, however, to set up Anthroposophy as a standard against which to evaluate Lewis's work in terms of postmodernism. More important than affinities or divergences between Lewis and Anthroposophy, is the conclusion that Steiner's thought constitutes a different mode of being postmodern from those which we have considered in earlier chapters, whether the postmodernism of theorists, such as Derrida, or the postmodernism of spiritual movements such Neo-paganism or the New Age Movement.

Although it contains much that might be considered bizarre by those outside the circle of Steiner's followers, including, for example, the theory of the two 'Jesus boys' (see Barfield, 1966; Lindskoog, 1998), Steiner's thought incorporates a sophisticated response to modern thought which comprehends both 'deconstructive' and affirmative aspects in a manner particular to Steiner. In this his approach is similar to that of Tarnas (1996) although, in this regard, it must be added that Steiner must be credited with an originality which is marked in comparison with the eclecticism of Tarnas, who includes Steiner amongst his most important sources. The originality of Steiner and his system of Anthroposophy suggests that it may be possible to advance a similar case for a Christian postmodernism which does not conform to the typical features of the generality of affirmative postmodernism. Could this be true even of one which remains within the broad, conservative tradition of what Lewis (1955) refers to as 'Mere Christianity'? Certainly CS Lewis, as exponent of Christian tradition, as 'graduate' of the school of Romanticism, and as close friend and intellectual sparring partner of leading Anthroposophists, was uniquely placed to be the advocate of such an alternative mode of being postmodern. The comparison with Steiner's postmodern thought adds weight to the conclusions regarding Lewis's thought which were arrived at in

Chapters Five and Seven. The discussion of Scholasticism in this chapter adds a further dimension to these conclusions. We have seen how Griffiths (1979) testifies to the negative attitude of Lewis towards Scholasticism but Lewis nevertheless firmly upheld the separation of Nature from God (eg Lewis, 1960) which had been the great achievement of Scholasticism. Although Steiner seeks to present an account of the evolution of thought, when it is understood in the light of this Scholastic achievement, Anthroposophy represents a similar kind of archaism to that identified in Eastern Orthodox theology by von Balthasar. It is only by retaining the Scholastic achievement that the development of a Christian postmodernism could remain true to Lewis's thought. This conclusion flies in the face of affirmative postmodernism generally, and Anthroposophy in particular, although Lewis's scepticism about the capacity of logical systems to hold the Real Presence of God not only parallels the anti-metaphysical stance of Steiner but represents also a vital element in such a Christian postmodernism. But if this Real Presence is identified as the key to Lewis's Christian thought by Payne (1988), it is accompanied by many other aspects which have been shown, in this thesis, to constitute an alternative mode of being postmodern.

PART IV

CS LEWIS: PROPHET OF POSTMODERNISM

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION: PROPHET OF POSTMODERNISM?

CHAPTER 10

POST SCRIPT: PROPHETS OF POSTMODERNISM

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSION: PROPHET OF POSTMODERNISM?

9.1 CS Lewis - exponent of tradition

In claiming, firstly, the title of 'exponent of tradition' for CS Lewis, this thesis is engaging in nothing startling. As has been shown, this is certainly the role which Lewis himself claimed he was wishing to fulfil. His direct attacks on the modern notion of 'originality', which have been cited, must be taken together with his own comments on the approach in his major apologetic work:

"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 manuscript of what is now Book II to four clergymen (Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic) and asking for their criticism." (Lewis, 1955:8)

At the time of his doing this, in the 1940s, the consciousness of doctrinal boundaries and differences would, in general, have been likely to be sharper than in most of those same Churches sixty years later. It is therefore significant that all were agreed that what Lewis presented of *Mere Christianity* was, with relatively minor objections from the Methodist and the Catholic, an accurate reflection of Christian belief as they understood it. If we acknowledge the criticism of Bede Griffiths that Lewis did not have a proper understanding of the nature of tradition, yet we still have to recognise that it was the common Christian tradition which Lewis sought to expound - and that he was apparently successful in this endeavour, not only in the eyes of his friends but also amongst those who had no liking for Lewis and his traditionalism (Wilson, 1991). And, despite Griffiths' strictures, Lewis's own description of his task, in books such as *Mere Christianity* and *The Problem of Pain*, not only underlines his emphatic renunciation of originality in undertaking that task but also

points out that his sources will be obvious to any informed reader:

"I have believed myself to be re-stating ancient and orthodox doctrines. If any parts of the book are 'original' in the sense of being novel or unorthodox, they are so against my will and as a result of my ignorance. ... I have tried to assume nothing that is not professed by all baptised and communicating Christians. ... Any theologian will see easily enough what, and how little, I have read.." (Lewis, 1957:viii)

Lewis's adherence to tradition must be regarded as firmly established, whatever weaknesses or blindspots might be identified in his grasp of that tradition. His own role as exponent of Christian tradition or, at least, of the 'highest common factor' of that tradition present across Catholic, Orthodox and 'mainline' Protestant Churches, may need to be differentiated from what disciples of Lewis have made of his position. Wilson (1991) describes 'Catholic' and 'Evangelical' factions amongst those disciples, the former partly centred around Walter Hooper at Oxford and the latter around Wheaton College in Illinois. Though they differ in their understanding of essential Christianity, their commonality would seem to lie in their adherence to Lewis's theological conservatism. Wilson's style is journalistic and tendentious, and he unfortunately obscures the sober nature of the reliance on the achievement of Lewis which is to be found in people across the spectrum of Christianity - as evident in the use, referred to earlier, of Lewis's thought by Kallistos Ware, now Orthodox Bishop of Diokleia. Many of the disciples of Lewis may be regarded as conservative only in the sense of their opposition to trends such as the theological liberalism of Bultmann and the stream of thought which he represented, which Lewis had opposed in his day; or to subsequent developments, such as the atheistic 'theology' of Mark C Taylor and Don Cupitt, against which the work of Lewis furnishes material to "defend the belief that has been common to nearly all Christians at all times" (Lewis, 1955:6). By his own admission, Wilson is closer to these authors than to the position which Lewis represents and seems unable to restrain himself from using his skill against those who adhere to that position. Nevertheless, the generally careful treatment that is typical of the contributors to the *CS Lewis Readers' Encyclopedia* still does confirm the assessment of the conservatism of academic admirers of the work of Lewis. There are grounds, however, for the critical and

sometimes scathing response of some commentators on the following which Lewis has sometimes attracted. One is reminded here of the comment of Jenson (1989) on the way that American Evangelicals came on pilgrimage to Basle under the misapprehension that Barth represented a conservative reaction to modernism. The postmodernism, which Kung (1995) identifies in Barth, arose in one who had stood firmly in the line of liberalism going back to Schleiermacher and beyond. The origins of Lewis's position were different - even if that position is identified as sharing something of the postmodernism of Barth. With regard to the undoubted conservatism of Lewis himself, even Wilson, whose biographical treatment of Lewis is decidedly two-edged, distinguishes the conservatism of Lewis from that of a 'mainline' American conservative figure such as Billy Graham, stating that Lewis "would not have shared any of Dr Graham's political enthusiasms" (Wilson: 1991:xiii). The paradoxical nature of Lewis's conservatism has been commented on at length in Chapter One but, as argued there and re-emphasised in the excerpts quoted in this section, his adherence to Christian tradition was unambiguous. Lewis would have accepted the title of 'exponent of tradition' as an honour even though he might have been, at the very least, somewhat ambivalent about attempts to link his name to any such movement as postmodernism..

9.2 Sources of the 'postmodern' in the thought of CS Lewis

It has been argued in this thesis, especially in Chapter Five, that there is a strong kinship between elements of the thought of Lewis, and what is now recognised as postmodernism. Three broad sources have been identified, in previous chapters, as contributing to Lewis's opposition to the worldview of modernity which became established in the course of the 'Enlightenment' and which drew its substance from the transmutation of precursors present in the Christian thought of the Western Middle Ages. These sources of Lewis's 'postmodernism' are as listed below.

9.2.1 The philosophical-theological thought of the Christian tradition

In Chapter Four of this dissertation, elements within the Eastern Christian tradition were discussed, which, it was argued, have a particular relevance to postmodernism. Although it cannot be said that the Eastern tradition maintained anything like a purity from Western 'contamination', it may, as Frank (1999) suggests, exercise a particular charism within Christianity as a whole. By virtue of a different balance of emphases in its development, in comparison with the Christian West, and despite its often fossilised traditionalism and strong reactionary tendencies, the Eastern tradition provides resources for a viable alternative, in a postmodern era, to the modern thought which has afflicted much of Western Christianity. There is a qualification which must be added, however, to this evaluation of the contribution of Eastern Christian thought, specifically to Lewis's capacity to stand apart from modern thought and to adopt a critical stance towards it. Important though the various aspects of the Eastern tradition mentioned in Chapter Four may be, that importance should not be over-estimated. Apart from those specific contributions, Lewis's policy of reading 'old books' (Lewis, 1985a; 1987c) had, as its explicit aim, the neutralisation of the biases of the present age:

"If one has to choose between reading the new books and reading the old, one must choose the old: not because they are necessarily better but because they contain those truths of which our own age is most neglectful" (Lewis, 1987:16).

Lewis is not here concerned with the specific weaknesses of the modern age - he is concerned with the weaknesses which are inherent to the thought of any age. His prescription of the reading of old books is a corrective to the biases which are an inevitable part of the human condition in all societies and in every age. It amounts, in fact, to a prescription for the human condition as diagnosed in sceptical postmodernism. Lewis's reading of the 'old books' of the Eastern Christian tradition would indeed have immunised him against the flaws of the modern worldview, and would have achieved this in very particular ways. But he claimed the same general effect for the reading of the authors of pagan Greece and Rome (Lewis, 1986c). And if he valued the writings of Classical paganism in this way, then even more did he value the writings of the Christian tradition,

of the West as much as the East. The names of St Augustine, Thomas More, Cranmer, Hooker, and others are scattered through his religious books (see eg Lewis, 1985a). Whatever the specific contribution of the influence of the Eastern tradition may have been to Lewis's 'postmodernism', his immersion in the writings of his own Western tradition of Christianity would also have contributed to his immunity to the 'Spirit of the Age' of modernity.

In view of the comparison with Nietzsche, which has been made much of in this thesis, and which is highlighted once more in the following paragraph, it is interesting to note that something like Lewis's policy on 'reading old books' lies behind Nietzsche's criticism of modernity. Nietzsche's attack on the humanism of modernity goes much further back to the origins of Christianity, from which modern humanism drew its humane values, and still further back to the tradition of pre-Christian moral philosophy flowing from Socrates. Nietzsche complains that,

"With Socrates Greek taste undergoes a change ... It is above all the defeat of a *nobler* taste; with dialectics the rabble gets on top" (Hollingdale, tr., 1990:41)

It is Nietzsche's reading of the old, pre-Socratic heroic literature that gives him his idea of the ethic of 'nobility' as opposed to that of morality. That reading may have been somewhat inaccurate (Tanner, 1990) but it nevertheless provided much of the motive force for the development of his critique of modern thought and ethics. But if Nietzsche's reading was unscholarly according to Tanner, then Lewis's was eminently scholarly, not only in its accuracy but also in its breadth, encompassing all of the pre-Christian Greek and Roman literature, as well as Norse, Germanic and much other (Lewis, 1957), but also a wide range of Christian writings through the two millennia of Christian existence. More than Nietzsche, perhaps, Lewis was in a position to avoid the bonds of the thought of his own age.

9.2.2 The tradition of opposition to modernity within the West

Foremost in importance amongst the opposition to modernity, for Lewis, would have been the Romanticism to which he was so strongly drawn in his youth. In Romanticism he found the often occult spirituality which provided the counterpoint to the 'Enlightenment'-inspired atheism of his adolescence and early adulthood (Lewis, 1959). As part of the nineteenth century 'Flight from Reason', documented by Webb (1971), this spirituality may be regarded as the early dawn of the spiritually-oriented postmodernism of the late twentieth century. Included as a key element in Steyn's (1994) account of this type of postmodernism, is the Theosophical movement which figures quite strongly in Lewis's philosophical autobiography (Lewis, 1977). But of special significance, in the context of this thesis, is the association, although admittedly an ambivalent and complex association, of Lewis with Anthroposophy. Anthroposophy is not altogether unconnected with Theosophy in the development of the spiritual elements of Romanticism but it surpasses not only Theosophy, but also other Romantic and affirmative postmodern movements, in that development. It is 'Romanticism come of age', in the opinion we have cited from Barfield (1966). In support of this judgement we have noted the way in which Richard Tarnas, in developing his postmodern theory, draws on Steiner's thought for his epistemology and not merely his spirituality. Lewis's ongoing debate with an Anthroposophist intellectual and leader like Barfield signifies a familiarity with many, if not all, of the issues relevant to the affirmative postmodernism which developed in the decades after his death.

More important, with regard to the type of postmodernism which is more generally recognised by that name in academic circles, the brooding colossus of Friedrich Nietzsche stands at the point of transition between Romanticism and postmodernism. That Lewis was familiar with the thought of Nietzsche is indicated by his own references (eg Lewis, 1981c). Despite the vehement reaction of Lewis against Nietzschean philosophy, it has been argued in this thesis that Lewis could not have escaped the impact of Nietzsche. If Lewis, after his conversion to Christianity, was repelled by Nietzschean thought, then, in his very reaction against it, his work displays something of its impact. And, if it is true, as Robinson (1999)

argues, that Nietzsche played a prophetic role with regard to the advent of postmodernism, then Lewis's engagement with Nietzsche would have thrust him into the arena of dawning postmodernism. With regard to the influence of both Romanticism and Nietzsche, it is necessary to appraise clearly their implications for the suggested prophetic role of Lewis. This conclusion is strengthened when other intellectual developments contemporary with Lewis are brought into the reckoning, amongst them the New Criticism, which was discussed in the analysis of Lewis's views on authorship, and the impact of the 'New Physics', which presented severe challenges to the modern worldview, and which was given serious consideration by Lewis (1955, 1960). As in the case of Eastern Christianity, so too, in these developments within Western thought, Lewis is the recipient rather than the initiator. Thus, as we have seen earlier, at least in respect of these elements in his thought, Lewis cannot be a 'prophet of postmodernism' in the common sense of having foretold it.

9.2.3 Lewis's own engagement with issues raised by the nature of modern thought

Here one must heed Lewis's disclaimers regarding his own originality. Yet, beyond what he received more-or-less directly from influences running counter to modernism within the modern West, and from the spiritual-intellectual resources of the Eastern Christian tradition which stands, in some degree like Buddhism, outside modernity, there are those other 'postmodern' aspects of his thought, which have been documented in Chapter Five. If they are not 'original', in the sense attacked by Lewis, then they represent at least a fresh synthesis. These elements in the thought of Lewis offer the potential for a Christian worldview which is not susceptible to the type of collapse which has been suffered by modern thought, perhaps as a result of the attacks of deconstructive postmodernism, but perhaps also as a result of a shift in the tide of general opinion, away from the 'certainties' of modernism. The ideas on myth and truth put forward by Lewis are amongst the most important of the 'resources for postmodernity' in his thought. But the fact of Lewis's reliance on the sources listed above does not in itself constitute grounds to disqualify these in the evaluation of Lewis's prophetic role regarding postmodernism.

9.3 CS Lewis - prophet of postmodernism?

The different senses of the term 'prophet' have been alluded to earlier in this thesis. The distinction, which is made with reference to the Biblical tradition, for example by Jones (1968), between the prophet as 'fore-teller' and as 'forth-teller', is relevant to this study's evaluation of the role of CS Lewis. Jones states that the primary role of the Hebrew prophets was not one of prediction but was that of proclamation. *Of course, the element of prediction cannot be discounted:*

"The relevant point is that the purpose of the prophet was not to point to the future and predict what would happen but to underline the moral claim of God in the present world. Men were challenged to respond to God here and now. If they did not, of course, there would be consequences in the future, of judgement if rejection continued and redemption if men and women rethought their way of living and returned to God. These future results are not in any way predicted in any rigid, mechanical sense but are the working out of God's moral purposes." (Jones, 1968:3-4)

Perhaps Jones's exposition of the nature of prophecy is conditioned a little too strongly by the parameters of the 'modern mind', to which he addressed this cautionary introduction to his book on the Old Testament prophets. He does not want them to be tainted with the stock image of the crystal ball-gazer. With the decline of the modern materialist model of reality, precognition and other 'paranormal' phenomena have, as argued in Chapter Two, emerged into a more general acceptance. Jones's observations are, nevertheless, important to any proper assessment of Biblical prophecy and are also pertinent to our evaluation of the position of Lewis in this study. The description 'prescient' has been used of Lewis more than once in the course of this thesis, and this requires us to consider carefully how Jones's distinction applies in the case of Lewis.

In *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis (1978) does adopt a more-or-less explicit prophetic role of the type described in the quotation from Jones. It is not a clairvoyant foretelling but a setting forth of the path, as Lewis sees it, which lies before humanity, as well as the consequences which will ensue if the human race presses modern reductionism to its logical conclusion. These are that, if the logic of the 'empty universe' (Lewis, 1986b) is ruthlessly

pushed to its conclusion so that the universe, as conceived by humanity, is emptied also of the values of the Natural Law, then 'Man' will be abolished. In place of humanity, as we have hitherto understood it, there will remain only the creatures of the 'Conditioners', the elite of 'scientific planners' who will have taken the destiny and the control of the human race to themselves. But even they will be bereft of the qualities of humanity, for they will have 'seen through' all ideas of truth and all that will remain to motivate them will be the drives thrown up by their biological organisms. It has been pointed out earlier in this thesis that this amounts to very much the same end-point reached in Nietzsche's thought, although viewed from an opposite perspective. But, apart from this association with Nietzsche, the prophetic role of Lewis is highlighted by the comparison with BF Skinner's *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* (Skinner, 1972), published more than twenty years after Lewis's book. Skinner, who brought the original Pavlovian idea of conditioning to the forefront of modern applied psychology in his 'operant conditioning' and 'behaviour modification', presents a vision in which he looks forward to precisely the kind of society in which Lewis sees the 'abolition of Man'. If this had been a "future result" predicted in a "rigid mechanical sense", as described by Jones (1968:3-4), then Lewis would have been merely another crank-prophet. But if Lewis's purpose, like that ascribed to the prophet by Jones, was "to underline the moral claim of God in the present world", and to warn of "consequences in the future" attending on the human response to God, then Lewis qualifies for the role of 'forth-teller' on grounds of his prophecy-as-proclamation. With the decline of faith in the mechanistic science of 'Enlightenment' modernism, the particular threat of the type of 'conditioned' world society envisaged by Skinner, and warned against by Lewis, has receded. But there are other threats inherent in a postmodern world and Lewis alludes to something of this when, in his paper on 'Equality', he comments that "Romantic attacks on democracy will come again" (Lewis, 1986a:20). What is significant in relation to this reference is the close link between Romanticism and postmodernism identified by Richard Tarnas. Implied in Lewis's statement is much more than a socio-political prediction. But it is also a prediction, and both that prediction, and the wider postmodern implications of what Lewis has in mind, deserve some consideration. Before proceeding to this, though, a summing-up of the

'postmodern' elements in Lewis, yielded from the three sources outlined above, is required. It will be argued, in this summing-up, that Lewis does have something of a prophetic role with regard to these elements, but primarily a proclamatory, rather than a predictive role.

9.4 Proclaiming the 'end of modernity'

Snyder (1988), in introducing Gianni Vattimo's *End of Modernity*, makes the point that the relationship between modernity and postmodernity cannot be conceived simply in terms of a chronological relationship of 'before and after'. Instead the postmodern exists in a type of continuing symbiotic, but critical relationship with the modern. If this understanding is applied consistently then there would be no place for the kind of references to a 'postmodern era' which are made in this thesis. But, as Hargreaves (1994) shows, there are good grounds for recognising that society has been entering on a new phase, superseding the modern age with its industrialism and massified forms of organisation. Changed attitudes to science, technology, and the realm of the spiritual, can be added as features of this change of an era. On the other hand, Hargreaves is careful to distinguish other features of the life of society from the particular aspect of social theory, and it is specifically with regard to theory that Snyder's observation is made. The continuing critical-symbiotic relationship of postmodernism to modernity, portrayed by Vattimo (1988), takes the form of a commentary on it and involves the exposure of its internal inconsistencies in what Vattimo calls the 'destruction' of modern thought, but which is referred to by Derrida as 'deconstruction'. On this view, the continuing tension between the modern and the postmodern goes back to the emergence of modernity and, in previous centuries, was expressed in Romantic opposition to the 'Enlightenment', for example. Thus wherever we have the modern there also we have, at least potentially, the postmodern - it does not have to wait for the dawn of a postmodern era to be constituted as such. Rousseau, Nietzsche, Barth and, more recently, Baudrillard, Foucault, Derrida, and Vattimo himself, all are representative of this ongoing critical tension. So too, we might add, is the Theosophy, occultism and spiritualism of the nineteenth century revulsion against the rational, materialistic, mechanistic worldview, documented in Webb's (1971) *Flight from Reason*. The 'New Age' understandings in Steyn's

(1994) *Worldviews in Transition* can also be understood in this way. All of these are broadly 'prophetic' in their proclamation of the 'end of modernity' - an 'end' which is not so much a point in time as it is a diagnosis of nullity. Vattimo (1988) embraces the nihilism of this 'end', as, in a different way, does Cupitt (1997; 1998) in his postmodern religion and postmodern mysticism. But postmodern religion, in the forms of the New Age Movement (Steyn, 1994), Neo-paganism (Harvey, 1997) and the 'Goddess' (Matthews, 1989), presents a fullness of positive content rather than merely a nullification. Lewis, needs to be assessed, in the light of this broad prophetic role, with regard to both his negative commentary on modern thought and the positive content offered in its place.

If we take the results of our investigation into the three sources of 'postmodernism' in Lewis's work, referred to earlier in this chapter, we find there is a substantial case to be made for the value of Lewis's contribution to a Christian position adequate to the demands of a situation in which the pillars of the modern worldview and the 'certainties' of modern thought have collapsed. This is so despite the apparently very un-postmodern commitment of Lewis to supernaturalist theism, ethical objectivism and the validity of reason, all of which must be taken into account in coming to a final conclusion. From the Christian tradition, and particularly the Eastern tradition within Christianity, Lewis drew a scepticism about the autonomy and substantiality of the human subject and a consequently qualified view of the efficacy of reason in human hands. This led Lewis's thought to further scepticism about the pretensions of modern thought. Thus, to Lewis, human knowledge is a frail, inadequate and inevitably misleading attempt at constructing truth. There can be no autonomous, 'metaphysically-privileged position' (Snyder, 1988) from which the innately rational human subject can survey reality and, as 'measure of all things', achieve comprehension of the whole, even in outline. In the case of science, even the "'natural object' produced by analysis and abstraction is not reality but only a view" (Lewis, 1978:47), and the distorting effect of that process of production means that it is constantly in need of correction. But, still worse for the modern view of things, in Lewis's view the process by which science produces its knowledge is socially contingent, so that every society gets

science within the limits that its mythic preconceptions permit. Far from it being the case that modern thought emancipated itself from myth so that it could operate by the light of reason, it only traded one set of myths for another. And if that applies to science, that holiest of holy cows of modernism, then so much for the claims of the various modern ideologies, also. But in theology too, and even in prayer, in Lewis's understanding all the images and understandings of our minds are by their very nature so misconstrued that they amount to self-deceptions and blasphemies. Lewis has no more room than Barth for the modern view of religion, going back to Schleiermacher, as the highest human activity in pursuit of truth. All our 'highest' knowledge is subject to apophatic 'deconstruction'. Also disqualified, in Lewis's estimation are the systematic constructions of human thought within which the modern mind, and perhaps the Western medieval mind before it, tried to 'fix' the truth about reality. Within the broad field of Christianity, Lewis observed those, like Tyndale and More, who were opposed on what to them were the most essential principles of doctrine and faith, and yet perceived in them a reflection of the holiness of the God Who speaks with one voice across divergences of belief. Thus, for Lewis, it lies beyond the capacity of the human person to attain a unified intellectual hold on truth, of the kind envisaged in the 'Enlightenment' ideal. And if the faculty of reason is still respected by Lewis, it is only in a subordinate role, as it was for St Maximus the Confessor in his insistence that only in subjection to the 'blessed passion of holy love' could it be relied on to provide truth. Contrary to the 'Enlightenment' estimation of the rational intellect, Lewis understood true enlightenment to rely on another source, which is why "an uneducated believer like Bunyan was able to write a book that has astonished the whole world" (Lewis, 1955::72) Creative capacities of the human person are derived, like reason, from sources other than the human self through which they are expressed. There is thus a large and variegated body of evidence which points to sources of Lewis's thought which would have put him in a position to develop something akin to a postmodern understanding of things. Foremost amongst these, perhaps, is the common Christian tradition, available to any serious student of the 'old books' on spirituality or theology, and more specifically the particular emphases of the Eastern tradition to which Lewis would have exposed himself.

Then, also, there is Romanticism, with the continuing critique of 'Enlightenment' modernism which it embodied, and its further developments, especially in the thought of Steiner and Nietzsche. Finally there are the products of Lewis's mature engagement with modern thought, for which we must avoid the description 'original', not least because these other sources, older than Lewis, would have constituted the basis from which Lewis would have conducted this engagement.

In reviewing these features of the thought of CS Lewis, a view emerges which is very different from that of the 'modern ideology' described by Gamble (1981), with its faith in humanity, reason, science and progress. The collapse of modern thought, described in the more finely textured philosophical analysis of Tamas (1996), does not drag the work of Lewis down with it, any more than it does so in the case of non-Western thought, such as that of Buddhism. Although modern thought, from the beginning, carried within itself the seeds of its own destruction, Buddhism developed from different roots and along a different course. In view of what has been said about the way in which modern thought drew on the thought of Western Christendom which preceded it, it may be argued that Western Christian thought, especially Scholasticism, is implicated in this collapse too. If, as has been argued, the precursors of modern thought are to be found in Scholasticism, then could it perhaps be that postmodernism in fact amounts to post-Scholasticism? As Copleston (1955) shows, Thomism did incorporate a relatively high view of the human capacity to know and understand, and the rationalism and empiricism, which St Thomas received from Aristotle, provided a crucial link in the development of Western thought. Other aspects of modern thought, such as natural rights, the idea of progress, the scientific method, and even the mechanical model of reality (Ihde, 1983), can be traced to Western medieval thought, even if not always to Scholasticism or to Thomism in particular. Apart from these types of consideration, though, fruitful further lines of inquiry are suggested by the comparison of the views of Steiner and von Balthasar on Scholasticism. The implication of Scholasticism in the 'end of modernity' might be a thesis worthy of research but it is, at this point, largely in the nature of an hypothesis, to which a counter must be offered in the observation, made

on a few occasions in this thesis, that it was a transmuted form of elements such as the humanism and rationalism of Thomism which were established as the foundation of the modern worldview. But, whatever the case in this regard, there is some significance in Bede Griffith's quotation from a personal letter from Lewis, concerning the neo-Scholasticism then current, and his own added comment:

"By the way, I hope that the great revival of religion now going on will not get mixed up with Scholasticism, for I am sure that the renewal of the latter, however salutary, must be as temporary as any other movement in philosophy.' This sums up pretty well his attitude to Scholasticism. He was not attracted to it himself, and with considerable prescience he regarded it as a movement in philosophy that was destined to pass along with others." (Griffiths, 1979:21)

Did that prescience of Lewis extend beyond the Scholastic revival of the mid-twentieth century, to be directed at the passing and temporary nature of the whole of modern thought as well? At least some of the evidence presented in this thesis seems to point to a degree of insight of that kind which might qualify Lewis as a 'prophet of postmodernism'. But in addition, and perhaps more important, in expressing the insights he derived from sources other than some prophetic precognition, he fulfilled the role of prophet in proclaiming the 'end of modernity'. That 'end' may have been available to be perceived by any who had 'eyes to see' the flaws and inconsistencies inherent in modern thought, and who took the trouble to look. It was Lewis's vocation to take the role of 'exponent of tradition' but in addition it was to look, to see, and to proclaim that the 'wisdom of the present age' was in fact foolishness. Like some of the Old Testament prophets he may have had rough edges to his personality, as indeed Wilson (1991) suggests. He may, despite the radicalism which has been claimed for him in Chapter One of this thesis, also have been saddled, as Wain (1979) argues, with a heavy-handed and self-conscious conservatism. But, looking back, from the vantage-point of the close of the twentieth century, he appears to have been a voice crying in the wilderness of modern thought, proclaiming its coming destruction - a prophet of postmodernism?

9.5 The paradoxically postmodern CS Lewis

In his assessment of Friedrich Nietzsche's role as prophet of postmodernism, Robinson (1999) outlines theme after theme of Nietzsche's thought which appear across the spectrum of current postmodern theorising. Later postmodern theorists appear to have appropriated Nietzsche's thought without much modification in many instances. There seems thus to be an excellent case for recognising Nietzsche as postmodern. Robinson himself is strongly inclined to that conclusion but holds back from a full commitment to it. He refers to trends in the later work of Nietzsche which run counter to a postmodern interpretation. So, too, Vattimo (1998) and Novak (1996) point out that, in his very attacks on the metaphysical underpinnings of modern Western thought, which is a major part of his alleged postmodernism, Nietzsche himself adopts a metaphysical position. The doctrine of the 'Eternal Return' (Sprigge, 1988) is decidedly metaphysical. Robinson points out that one should not look for a system in Nietzsche's writing - it was one of his most emphatic characteristics that he was not systematic. If it cannot be said that CS Lewis is an unsystematic thinker then his thought is, as has been argued repeatedly in this thesis, often marked by a strongly paradoxical quality. Paradox, or incommensurability in Feyerabend's (1988) terms, is not something alien to postmodern theory but, if Robinson shows restraint in the far stronger case which he makes for Nietzsche's postmodernism, then it would be rash to leap to a firm conclusion in evaluating Lewis's position as postmodern. Substantial evidence has been presented to support such a conclusion but other features of Lewis's thought seem to run clearly counter to this conclusion. The prime ones amongst these have already been identified as his unshakeable attachment to a supernaturalist theism, to ethical objectivism and to the validity of reason. The latter two are predicated on the first and so it is that which demands the most immediate response, while the others will be dealt with in the course of the final chapter.

The traditional, Christian, supernaturalistic theism of Lewis is at odds with postmodernisms of all kinds, not only affirmative or constructive but also sceptical and deconstructive. Before this is taken as conclusive evidence against the 'postmodernism' of Lewis, the

continuities of postmodern with modern thought also need to be taken into account. With regard to affirmative postmodernism, it seems that its characteristic pantheism or panentheism does not represent any break with modernity. Lewis's (1960) argument, presented in Chapter Seven, that pantheism is the real religion of modernity, may not be not accepted by all. But his evidence at least suggests that pantheism is a well-represented phenomenon within modern thought. His anecdotal report, referring to his experience in discussions at the popular, public level, matches his observations at the level of 'culture' and academic philosophy. As has been argued in this thesis, the writings of authors such as Rosemary Ruether and Richard Tarnas, provide evidence that pantheism, or at least a monism with pantheistic tendencies, is equally represented in postmodern thought. If we turn from affirmative to deconstructive postmodernism we find a different continuity with modern thought. The French intellectuals of the nineteen-seventies and later, whose names are associated with the postmodernism of scepticism, in some ways did not make as decisive a break with modern thought as is claimed. Baudrillard's work lies in a line of continuity with the Marxist tradition (Horrocks, 1999). Derrida directed himself to the resurrection of Marx, even if as a heretical pluralist Marx (Sim, 1999). Even Foucault, who turned his efforts most directly against Marxism, developed his thought out of a Marxist position (MacNay, 1994). In general, also, there seems to be commonality or continuity between neo-Marxist critical theory (Hawkes, 1996) and postmodern scepticism. Tarnas (1996:401) writes that postmodernism involves a "'hermeneutics of suspicion' in the spirit of Marx, Nietzsche and Freud". The mention of Freud as well as Marx underlines the aspect of modern-postmodern continuity, and the link between Marxism and the postmodernists who stand in the tradition of Nietzschean nihilism, is underlined by Murray (1964). Murray, using the term 'postmodern' in a sense not quite the same as that which developed later, contrasts the condescending atheism of 'Enlightenment' modernism with the militantly anti-theistic atheism of Marx and Nietzsche which he designates as 'postmodern'. If we bring this all down to a comparison with the theism of Lewis's thought, what emerges is the continuity which exists between modern and postmodern atheism. Once again we see that it is simplistic to pick on Lewis's theism as a disqualifying factor in evaluating his

postmodern relevance - one might as well identify pantheism or atheism as factors disproving postmodernism in general..

9.6 CS Lewis for a postmodern age

Thus, whether or not this is regarded as paradoxical, the full-bodied, orthodox Christian theism of Lewis co-exists very firmly with the postmodern tendencies which have been identified in his thought and work in this thesis. Permeating all Lewis's thought is his faith in the 'living God' who "does one thing and not another", but who is also the God of whom Lewis writes that "systems cannot keep up with that darting illumination" (Lewis, 1967:100). Lewis, for all his valuing of reason, has little in common with the rationalism of the 'Enlightenment' and its further developments. His attitude is the highly qualified understanding of reason quoted from Harwood in Chapter Five, and is at one with that of St Maximus the Confessor. In his understanding, its powers are seen in a definitely subordinate role in relation to other faculties which connect the human 'intellect' with spiritual realities far transcending those available to the human mind by means of its empirical-rational capacities. And, with the Eastern Christian tradition as a whole, Lewis celebrates mystery and paradox in a way that is totally opposed to the autonomous, rational pretensions of the modern mind. Here, too, the place of myth in Lewis's thought must be recalled. For Lewis it is the imagination and not the rational intellect which is the faculty by which reality must be apprehended. Reason relies on the material of myth for its starting point. And despite Lewis's upholding of the classical and scholastic notion of the 'practical reason' as the mode of moral functioning, Lewis's objectivist ethics are far removed from modern rationalist ethical philosophies, whether utilitarian or based on a calculus of instinct (Lewis, 1978). Lewis's ethical ideas are based on the "Great Dance" (Lewis, 1943), the *perichoresis* of the Greek Fathers, the dynamic activity of the eternal interplay of love between the Persons of the Trinity - the living God. Unlike the calculating use of the juridical metaphor which has dominated so much of the moral philosophy and soteriology of Western Christianity, Catholic and Protestant, Lewis sees ethics and salvation in more Eastern terms, as the incorporation of human beings into this 'Great Dance' of the divine life.

"If you want to get warm you must stand near the fire; if you want to get wet you must get into the water. If you want joy, power, peace, eternal life, you must get close to, or even into, the thing that has them. They are not a sort of prizes which God could, if He chose, just hand out to anyone. They are a great fountain of energy and beauty spurting up at the very centre of reality. If you are close to it, the spray will wet you; if you are not, you will remain dry. Once a man is united to God, how could he not live forever? Once a man is separated from God, what can he do but wither and die?" (Lewis, 1955:150)

Here, at the 'centre of reality' is the *Real Presence*, which Payne (1988) identifies as the key to the 'Christian Worldview of CS Lewis'. But this is not the centre of a rational system of human construction. This is a Reality accessible to the human imagination as it opens itself to myth, which is the only way for the mind to apprehend that Reality. But, even further removed from the rule of the cold, rational intellect of modern thought, Lewis tells us that access to reality requires more than reason or even imagination:

"No net less wide than a man's whole heart, nor less fine of mesh than love, will hold the sacred Fish." (Lewis, 1967:100)

This is the response of love and faith testified to across the broad Christian tradition which Lewis sought to represent. If Lewis qualifies as prophet of postmodernism it is, paradoxically, because he looked back beyond the modern age to a Christian tradition which preceded it. To a recognition of Lewis's roots in the Western medieval world (Huttar, 1998), must be added the realisation that those roots extend further back, via the monastic theological tradition to the *Church Fathers*. And, apart from Western monastic tradition, recognition must be given to the Eastern theological tradition, with which Western monastic theology had strong links, and which also its drew life from the *Fathers*. Lewis's rootedness in this broad Christian tradition provided the basis and much of the means by which he was able to stand apart from the movements of modern thought. That position was not a mere anti-modernism: it represented a conscious engagement with both Christian tradition and modern thought. If it is not postmodern in the eyes of those who have written postmodernism into the consciousness of educated readers, it nevertheless represents a response to modern thought which is able to hold its own in the era of the 'end of modernity'.

As such the thought of CS Lewis, exponent of tradition that he was, presents Christians with a resource in facing the challenge of the postmodern.

But if, despite his advocacy of the 'supernatural theism' so uncongenial to postmodernists both affirmative and 'deconstructive', Lewis may thus be titled 'Prophet of Postmodernism', then it must also be recognised that it is not just his theism which runs counter to the general stream of the postmodern. In this chapter it two further issues have been noted as being associated with Lewis's theism: his ethical objectivism and his regard for reason. Both are central to the Christian tradition which Lewis represents but, rather than simply constituting counter factors in the evaluation of his postmodernism, in Lewis's thought they each take on an expression which enhances his role in presenting a Christian position adequate to a postmodern situation. With regard to ethical objectivism and morality, the thought of Lewis stands in direct conflict with that of Nietzsche, the prior 'Prophet of Postmodernism', but simultaneously displays striking similarity to it. Lewis's views on reason, amongst other faculties by which reality may be apprehended, and on the importance of myth, have already been dealt with in Chapter Five. With regard to the validity of reason, Lewis's view stands in straightforward opposition to those of Nietzsche and the postmodernism of which he is a major source. But it is very much at one with the view of Pope John-Paul II who has sought to exercise a prophetic role as head of the Catholic Church, in addressing himself directly to postmodernism and the question of reason, and who is judged as a postmodern phenomenon in the eyes of detractors too (see Appignanesi & Garratt, 1995). Therefore a further chapter is offered by way of a postscript to this, the concluding chapter of this thesis, on the relation of Lewis's thought to that of Nietzsche and John-Paul II with regard to these issues. The purpose is not to present additional, substantive research on matters which may be deserving of research theses in their own right. Rather, it is to point to areas in which the work and thought of CS Lewis have significant further ramifications in terms of the postmodern.

CHAPTER TEN

POSTSCRIPT: PROPHETS OF POSTMODERNISM

10.1 Christian and anti-Christian prophets of postmodernism

The use of the phrase 'prophet of postmodernism' in relation to CS Lewis in the title of this thesis has to be taken in the light of its prior ascription to Friedrich Nietzsche by Tarnas (1996) and Robinson (1999). As Snyder (1988) shows, it is primarily with regard to 'deconstructive' postmodernism that this prophetic role of Nietzsche is recognised. But it has also been shown in this thesis that the note of affirmation, evident in wider postmodern developments, is prefigured in Nietzsche too. The affirmation of Nietzsche differs, however, from that of the greater part of current affirmative postmodernism. The postmodernism of Cupitt (1997, 1998) captures something of the note of joy in this side of Nietzsche's thought, even if somewhat superficially, but Cupitt's atheism and anti-spiritualism also validly represents the distinction between Nietzsche's type of affirmation and that of the spiritually-oriented postmodernisms which rose to prominence in the latter part of the twentieth century. It is significant in the context of this thesis that, apart from the other postmodern associations of Lewis's thought which have been dealt with, the quality of 'joy' is one which has a particular place in Lewis's thought. Indeed, the striking parallel between the centrality of joy in the development of the thought of both Lewis and Nietzsche, will be highlighted in this chapter with a view to demonstrating a fascinating point of contact between Lewis and the historical figure who has been designated, by authors such as Tarnas and Robinson as *the* prophet of postmodernism. Within Christianity, joy is of course not a concern which is peculiar to Lewis - it is amongst the nine fruits of the Spirit listed in the Epistle to the Galatians, and some have supposed it to be particularly characteristic of Christian movements such as the Salvation Army (Collier, 1968). But, in the development of Lewis's thought, the idea of joy has a special role which will be examined in this chapter in relation to the elaboration of a vision for a postmodern

Christianity in the work of Lewis. It will also be shown that the notion of joy is one which, in the vision of Lewis, is linked together with morality, faith and reason. Morality is also a key concern of Nietzsche, although in his thought, as opposed to Lewis's Christian thought, it is the ultimate foe of joy. Similarly, reason is one of the prime targets of Nietzsche's polemic against Western thought since Socrates, as it is in 'deconstructive' postmodernism also (Robinson, 1999). Faith too would fall under the same onslaught, at least faith in any orthodox Christian sense. In Lewis's thought, though, morality and faith are inextricably linked together, with each other and with the experience of joy, in his Christian 'worldview' (Payne, 1988). Also, as we have seen in previous chapters, reason is equally integral to the Christian thought of Lewis, although its place must be understood in relation to the role of imagination and myth, which have been accorded such an important place in this thesis already. The discussion in this chapter therefore aims at elucidating the claim for a prophetic role for Lewis in the light of the similar claim for Nietzsche in relation to postmodernism, against the backdrop of their conflicting understandings of morality and joy, and reason and faith. In addition, though, commentary by Pope John-Paul II on modern thought and postmodernism, and on the relation of faith to reason, will be dealt with. This will be done in the light of his own concerns in addressing the issues of postmodernism (John-Paul II, 1998), his own particular interest in the work of Lewis (Wilson, 1991), and the association which some of his detractors detect between Pope John-Paul II and postmodernism (Appignanesi & Garratt, 1995). As indicated in the previous chapter, the aim here is not to present the outcome of research on the thought of Nietzsche or John-Paul II - the substantive research component of this thesis, relating to the thought of CS Lewis, is to be found in Chapters Four, Five, Seven and Eight. Rather, the purpose of this chapter is to point to some interesting parallels between those on whose behalf a claim may be made for the title of 'prophet of postmodernism'.

10.2 Lewis and Nietzsche

10.2.1 The affirmation of joy in Lewis and Nietzsche

Sheldon Vanauken, a friend and disciple of CS Lewis, discusses the place of joy in Lewis's thought, concluding: "This, I think, is what CS Lewis's life and writings are *about*" (Vanauken, 1979:207). In view of the comparison which has been made in this thesis between Lewis and Nietzsche as 'prophets of postmodernism' it is important to note similarities between them in this regard. (Apart from any other factors, their common roots in the Romantic Movement and the corollary of their shared antipathy to Enlightenment modernism should be recalled, despite the chasm which separates them in other respects.) Novak (1996) acknowledges that Nietzsche struggled to uphold his affirmative alternative to the nihilism which so characterises his work. He nevertheless underlines this aspect of Nietzsche's thought. Within this affirmation of Nietzsche, joy is a crucial element, however much it may have eluded him in practice. Novak (1996) offers, in his anthology, *The Vision of Nietzsche*, three sections of excerpts headed "The Creator", which follow several under the title of "The Destroyer". The middle of these three sections, titled "Higher Humanity", focuses on the 'Superman', which is what most immediately comes to mind in thinking of the affirmative Nietzsche. But the headings of the sections before and after provide another perspective on Nietzsche's affirmation: these are "The Free Spirit" and "Joyful Wisdom". Under the former, Novak (1996: 124-5) provides an excerpt from Nietzsche's *Daybreak*:

"We aeronauts of the spirit! - all these brave birds which fly out into the distance, into the furthest distance .. would we *cross* the sea ... Will it perhaps be said of us one day that we too, *steering westward, hoped to reach an India* - but that it was our fate to be wrecked against infinity? Or, my brothers. Or?"

And, from *The Gay Science* (Novak, 1996: 126-127):

"*The background of our cheerfulness.* The greatest recent event - that "God is dead" ... Indeed we philosophers and 'free spirits' feel as if a new dawn were shining on us when we receive the tidings that 'the old god is dead'."

The lifting of the sense of oppression which Nietzsche celebrates here is closely matched in Lewis's autobiographical *Pilgrim's Regress* (Lewis, 1977) which is the account of Lewis's philosophical pilgrimage in search of fulfillment of the "intense longing" of "sweet Desire" (Lewis, 1977:12&13). This is the 'joy' which he refers to in his other autobiographical account, *Surprised by Joy* (Lewis, 1959), and which we must consider in more detail a little later in this chapter. In *The Pilgrim's Regress* his allegorical journey begins in the 'land of Puritania', with its hypocritical moralism. This brings to mind Nietzsche's rebellion against his own upbringing as "the son of an austere Lutheran pastor" (Robinson, 1999:4). But if Nietzsche's continuing hatred of Christianity in his philosophical journey diverged from Lewis's conclusion as an apologist for the Christian tradition, this should not obscure the similarity of their starting-points and their convergence, however different the final connotations, on the experience of joy as the fulfillment of human existence.

It might be added that even in the matter of the 'death of God' Nietzsche and Lewis may not be as far apart as might appear. Lewis's apophaticism in his 'Footnote to all prayers,' and in his assertion of the need for all our concepts of God to be shattered (Lewis, 1966), certainly implies the death of the God which we construct out of our own experience, including the puritanically moralistic God of Lewis's and Nietzsche's upbringing. To Lewis, though, this 'death' is a means by which the 'living God', Who always eludes our attempts at neat, categorical conceptualisation, may break through to be effectively present to human beings, who in fact always stand in His presence. It is this presence of the 'living God' in Lewis's thought and work which gives a very different quality to the quest for joy, in comparison with Nietzsche's. To both Lewis and Nietzsche joy has an elusive quality. In Lewis this elusiveness is clearly linked with the elusiveness of God which has been referred to above. With regard to Nietzsche, this quality is captured in the concluding phrase to his extolling of the free spirit: "Or, my brothers. Or?". It might be conjectured that this elusiveness of the experience of joy for Nietzsche is a corollary of his own version of 'apophaticism', his 'philosophy with a hammer'. In Lewis's case, the elusiveness of God,

in the face of cognitive categorisation and moral codification, parallels the experience of joy, which he traces to his early childhood (Lewis, 1959). Lewis (1977:12-13) writes of it as follows:

“The experience is one of intense longing. It is distinguished from other longings by two things. In the first place, though the sense of want is acute and even painful, yet the mere wanting is felt to be somehow a delight. ... In the second place, there is a peculiar mystery about the *object* of this Desire. Inexperienced people ... suppose, when they feel it, that they know what they are desiring. Thus if it comes to a child while he is looking at a far off hillside he at once thinks ‘if only I were there’; if it comes when he is remembering some event in the past, he thinks ‘if only I could get back to those days’. If it comes (a little later) while he is reading a ‘romantic’ tale or poem of ‘perilous seas and faerie lands forlorn’, he thinks it is wishing that such places really existed and that he could reach them. If it comes (later still) in a context with erotic suggestions he believes he is desiring the perfect beloved. If he falls upon literature (like Maeterlinck or the early Yeats) which treats of spirits and the like, he may think that he is hankering for real magic and occultism. When it darts out upon him from his studies in history or science, he may confuse it with the intellectual craving for knowledge. But every one of these impressions is wrong.”

Lewis’s story, though described in different ways in *The Pilgrim’s Regress* and *Surprised by Joy*, ends in faith in God, accompanied by morality, in the *Regress* by personified ‘Vertue’ - now a passion rather than a code of required behaviour. In the final paragraph of *Surprised by Joy* (Lewis, 1959:190) he poses and answers a question,

“But what, in conclusion of Joy? For that, after all, is what the story has mainly been about. To tell the truth, the subject has lost nearly all interest for me since I became a Christian. I cannot, indeed, complain, like Wordsworth, that the visionary gleam has passed away. I believe (if the thing were at all worth recording) that the old stab, the bitter-sweet, has come to me more often and as sharply since my conversion as at any time of my life whatever. But now I know that the experience, considered as a state of my own mind, had never had the kind of importance I once gave it. It was only valuable as a pointer to something other and outer.”

If, as Vanuaken states, joy is what Lewis’s life and writings are all about, then it must be understood that joy is not the object but the sign and symptom of fulfillment for Lewis. But what of morality, which Lewis, like Nietzsche, fled in starting on his pilgrimage.

10.2.2 Morality and joy

At the start of his 'pilgrim's regress' Lewis had sought to flee the morality of 'Puritania' in search of Joy but in the end it was passionate 'Vertue' who accompanied him to the unsought destination of which Joy was merely the signpost. The Moral Law (or Natural Law, or 'the *Tao*' as Lewis chose to refer to it) is Lewis's initial topic in the popular apologetics of *Mere Christianity* (Lewis, 1955) and it is also the substance of his Riddell Memorial Lectures, published as his most weighty philosophical work, *The Abolition of Man* (Lewis, 1978). It is a major concern in many of his other publications. But Lewis's understanding of morality far transcends that of a mere moralist. While affirming its essential role in human life he nevertheless writes:

"I think all Christians would agree with me if I said that though Christianity seems at first to be all about morality, all about duties and rules and guilt and virtue, yet it leads you on, out of all that, into something beyond. One has a glimpse of a country where they do not talk of those things, except perhaps as a joke. Everyone there is filled full with what we should call goodness as a mirror is filled with light. But they do not call it anything. They are not thinking of it. They are too busy looking at the source from which it comes. But this is near the stage where the road passes over the rim of our world. No one's eyes can see very far beyond that: lots of people's eyes can see further than mine."

(Lewis, 1955:129)

The final disclaimer in this paragraph is noteworthy not merely for the humility which Lewis displays. Implicit in this disavowal is the same refusal to engage in the kind of reliance on systems of thought which was discussed with regard to Lewis's work in Chapter Five: Lewis here wishes us to see beyond truth and to reach out to reality. Truth can be systematised and codified in ways most satisfying to metaphysically inclined minds. But, to Lewis, truth, whatever its value, is never adequate to reality. It is not that Lewis is questioning the truth of morality, of "duties and rules and guilt and virtue". But truth is about reality; it is not reality itself. The paragraph which is quoted here comes at the end of a chapter on faith in his *Mere Christianity*. It is faith which he therefore presents, here, as the route to reality, but there is a poetic quality to his writing in this paragraph which suggests, in the light of what Lewis (1966) says about imagery and myth, that faith is not to be divorced from myth.

But before this line of thought is followed up in more detail it is necessary to consider the nature of morality and moral truth further.

As described earlier in this thesis Lewis presents a 'Trinitarian ethics' in which moral rules are considered to be a codification of the living reality of the dynamic life of the Three-Personal God (Lewis, 1955). As such, morality is a set of conventions, important in the function which they perform for human society, and as a guide to the good life, but not to be confused with the living reality of which they are a dim reflection. Thus, to take the comparison with Nietzsche further, in his way Lewis also prophesies the setting aside of morality, not in the sense of its negation as in Nietzsche, but by transcending it in order to achieve its true fulfillment. Lewis (1943) uses the image of the 'Great Dance' - the *perichoresis* of the Greek Fathers - to convey the nature of the life to which morality points us. Morality is the stylised, conventional choreography of the Great Dance of the dynamic eternal life which is in God, and the end of morality is that human beings should be drawn up into this life. This is the 'end of morality' in another sense also because, in achieving this goal, morality is transcended and is no longer required because its purpose is accomplished. In this understanding of morality we see its relationship to joy. Morality is the sign, even though not a fully adequate one, of the Great Dance of the divine life. So too, in Lewis's conclusion to *Surprised by Joy*, is joy. Joy is the natural symptom of that life, even though those participating in the Dance are focused on something else other than joy. 'Trinitarian ethics' is an ethics of joy. Conventional morality, though an expression of the Great Dance, represents it at a remove, as choreographic conventions express dance at a remove. The gap which thus potentially exists, between morality and that which it expresses, can be lead to a falling-away by which morality can become a cold, joyless thing. But in Lewis's thought, joy is at the heart of what morality is about.

It is at this point that we need to consider once more the place of joy in Nietzsche's thought. It is the living experience which Nietzsche seeks even while he engages in his iconoclastic attack on conventional truth, both conventional morality and conventional knowledge.

Hollingdale (1990:26) comments in his translator's note to Nietzsche:

“Alone, ill and unsuccessful, Nietzsche in the 1880s is however not a figure to pity: in one book after another, couched in a style it must have been a perpetual delight to realise, he celebrated as no one else has ever done, the splendour, power and joy of life.”

If (like Tarnas) we take the deconstructive postmodernism, of which Nietzsche is the father, to be the cracking open of the conventional constructions of our 'truth', then joy is the sweet kernel of reality within in. As is evident from the discussions of Derrida's thought in Sturrock (1979) and Hart (1989), the deconstruction of truth (where truth is understood as a construction of reality) is not a denial that there is a reality. A radical deconstructionism does not have to deny that there is a reality when it sets about shattering what is offered as truth - it merely denies that this truth can be taken as a valid representation of that reality. Something of this understanding is expressed by Lewis (1979b) when he states that reality is that which truth is about. If we link this with the statement of Lewis, quoted in Chapter Five, that “reason is the natural organ of truth but imagination is the organ of meaning”, then it is evident that truth, as the construction of reason, is a step removed from reality and meaning. Cognitive truth, derived by the theoretical reason, is like moral truth, grasped by the practical reason, in being a step removed from that which they are about, which is reality, and meaning, and joy.

As argued in Chapter Five, the point at which modern thought and, to the extent that it makes itself susceptible in the same way, Western Christian thought also, is open to the deconstructionist attack, lies in its construction of metaphysical systems, based on logical inference. It was in answer to this difficulty that elements of Lewis's thought were suggested as offering a potential way around the problem: the divine Real Presence is Reality Itself. It is that which is immanent in all human attempts at truth: those attempts may be in contradiction of each other in many ways, but the same reality of the 'decentred centre' may be discerned, by those with eyes to see, at the heart of each. We see here, too, the link with the understanding of 'knowledge/passion' discussed in Chapter Four in

connection with the role of love in the epistemological position of St Maximus the Confessor. It is the 'passion of holy love' which is essential in the exercise of reason as the 'organ of truth', for without it other, unholy passions which beset the human soul will enter into its constructions which will thus, to that extent, be 'truth' divorced from reality. If we then compare Nietzsche with Lewis, we find that to Nietzsche joy is the experience awaiting those who can break free of the conventions of accepted 'truth' and plunge unfettered into an experience of the will-to-power; but to Lewis there is something else, "or a Someone" (Lewis, 1955:8), waiting beyond human constructions of truth. This truth is not to be broken free of, in Nietzsche's sense, but transcended in the experience of That which it is about. But, as we have seen also, to Lewis, somewhat similarly to Nietzsche, joy is the pointer to, and the mark of that experience of reality, although, in contrast to Nietzsche's concern with power, it is the 'passion of holy love' which provides the dynamism of the Great Dance of eternal life.

10.2.3 Faith and myth

At least two issues which relate to the experience of reality, to which Lewis would direct us, remain to be addressed and developed further: myth and faith. The argument advanced in connection with Lewis's view of myth, in Chapter Five, is that it provides an access to reality which is different in kind to that attempted by the rationalism of modernity and undermined by the deconstructionism of postmodernity. This function is applicable to the role of faith in Lewis's thought also. The excerpt on morality, quoted from *Mere Christianity* in the previous section, comes at the conclusion of Lewis's treatment of faith. Despite the 'ecumenical' nature of Lewis's project it must be observed that his understanding of faith is not exactly that of Luther nor that of popular contemporary Evangelical Protestantism, although neither is he anywhere near a religion of 'salvation by works'. In this regard, reference to his understanding of the synergism of faith and works has already been made. But, apart from faith looked at from the perspective of the human response, a broader understanding of the nature of faith is also evident in Lewis's view of the object of faith:

“What God is in Himself, how He is to be conceived by philosophers, retreats continually from our knowledge. The elaborate world pictures which accompany religion and which look each so solid while they last, turn out to be only shadows. It is religion itself - prayer and sacrament and repentance and adoration - which is here, in the long run, our only avenue to the real.” (Lewis, 1979c:37)

Faith, in this context, is not merely the subjective experience of some popular Evangelicalism, although Evangelical Protestants might identify their position with Lewis's (1955) view that the crucial thing (although, to Lewis, the terrible, almost impossible thing), is to hand over one's whole self to Christ. But faith is more than subjective experience: it is “prayer and sacrament and repentance and adoration”, that is “religion itself” - the whole turning of human beings to the Source of their being. What must also be noted in this passage is the confirmation of the observation, already made repeatedly in Chapters Four and Five, of the compatibility (to some degree at least) of a ‘deconstructive’ position with the thought of Lewis: all knowledge, including the ‘world-pictures’ of religion, may look solid but “turn out to be only shadows”. Of course a shadow is not so much a misrepresentation as a dim and inadequate representation. A shadow is an indication of a reality which is present but it is not to be grasped as the reality itself. In aspiring to the real, our pictures must be laid aside, our images shattered. It is faith, “religion itself”, which is “our only avenue to the real”.

If it is faith, in this broad sense, which provides access to reality, then what of myth? Myth, as we have noted above, is also identified by Lewis as providing access to reality. What is the relationship of myth to faith? And is not myth merely another instance of the imagery which must be laid aside or shattered? In *An Experiment in Criticism* Lewis (1992) discusses myth from the point of view of literary criticism, a perspective which is not entirely consonant with the present argument. In it, however, he defines myth in terms of the effect which it has on those who receive the myth. Myth is not the mere content of a story. In fact, Lewis (1992:44) argues, the same story may function as a myth for one person while to another it is only a story - it is the quality of the experience which determines its mythical status:

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

Myth thus, rather than being grasped by the hearer or reader, has the capacity to grasp those who may receive it.

Myth is more than mere story, picture or image. In this particular discussion, Lewis (1992:45) explicitly declines to go beyond a concern “with the effect of myths as they act on the conscious imagination of minds more or less like our own” - that is of those who have received a critical literary education. He nevertheless does not discount various possibilities, for example that they may be the “outcroppings of the individual or the collective unconscious” (Lewis, 1992:44-5). But elsewhere (Lewis, 1979b), when he ventures into the area of ‘myth become fact’, we come up against an altogether more far-reaching evaluation of myth, as communicating larger realities. In this regard the Incarnation, and Death and Resurrection, of Christ are, for Lewis, ‘myth become fact’. This Myth is echoed dimly in all the Pagan stories of dying and rising gods, Lewis (1960) believes. They are a reflection of It, not It of them. But if, as has been argued, the effect of myth in general is to grasp those who receive it, then this Myth is able to bring those who receive it into the experience of eternal Fact itself - for it is ‘Myth become Fact’. The ‘larger reality’ of the divine Real Presence, so central to Lewis’s Christian thought, is ‘realised’ by human beings through the operations of myth. It at this point that we perceive Lewis’s view of the meeting of myth and faith: both involve the experience of being drawn up into reality - the same experience which, in Lewis (1955), is described as being drawn up into the Trinity, and is the whole purpose of the Christian life. Thus, also, myth and faith are linked with morality in the ‘Trinitarian ethics’ referred to previously in this chapter. And of all this, for Lewis, joy is the sign, although not the substance.

To Lewis, the Myth, which is eternal Reality, becomes fact by becoming incarnate in this world. And we must apply to this Myth his statement, quoted in chapter Five with regard to myth in general, that it is the “mountain whence all the different streams arise which become truths down here in the valley” (Lewis, 1979b:43). The way of ascent up the holy mountain is by being ‘drawn up’ but this is not (in general at least) a sudden dramatic translation to another realm. It is the path of morality and religion, whose descriptions by Lewis we have already noted: in the one case “duties and rules and guilt and virtue”, and in the other “prayer and sacrament and repentance and adoration”. It is only in this way that, in Lewis’s words, the Myth may feed those who hold to the Christian story. But for those thus fed, it is the experience of being drawn up into another country, beyond the point where “the road passes over the rim of our world”, a country where not only morality and religion but also joy are no longer concerns. Those who arrive at that place are not thinking of these things, because “they are too busy looking at the source” (Lewis, 1955:129). These words of Lewis conclude not only Lewis’s two chapters on faith. They are the conclusion to Book III, ‘Christian Behaviour’, of *Mere Christianity*: the end of morality is faith, but the end of faith is in the Source of Myth.

In all the discussion of this chapter up to this point, what has been sometimes explicit, but always implicit, is the ‘postmodern’ nature of Lewis’s thought. We have seen, in the issue of joy, a point of contact between the thought of Lewis and that of the ‘prophet of postmodernism’, Friedrich Nietzsche. We have also seen a range of affirmative content to Lewis’s ‘postmodernism’ which goes beyond that of Nietzsche, whose thought, in the end, remains tied to the determinism of his biologism and his ‘great return’. However, Lewis’ defence of reason as the ‘organ of truth’ stands alongside his advocacy of the traditional morality of the ‘Tao’ at the point of irreconcilable difference with Nietzsche. As we have seen, though, Lewis’s understanding of reason, truth and morality diverge widely from the view of these things which is attacked by Nietzsche and the postmodernism which follows him. In evaluating the ‘postmodernism’ of Lewis, we have repeatedly seen the significance of the question of reason. In this thesis we have considered the relationship of reason to

myth, but what of the relationship of reason to faith? Lewis wrote on faith as an essential aspect of *Mere Christianity*, and wrote still more on reason in various places in his works. For a consideration of the relationship of faith and reason we may look to the writings of Pope John-Paul II, not to make up for a deficiency in Lewis's thought but to elucidate it. In doing so, we turn from Nietzsche, and his role as 'prophet of postmodernism' which consisted in his proclamation of the collapse of the 'Enlightenment project' (Tarnas, 1996), to another, very different antagonist of the 'Enlightenment'. In turning to John-Paul II we encounter, a century later, a figure equally critical of the 'Enlightenment' (Kwitny, 1998). At least by Kwitny's account, John-Paul II displays an opposition to the 'Enlightenment' which is based on a position which is hardly prophetic. In an even more derogatory spirit, Appignanesi & Garratt (1995) attribute postmodernism, of a sort, to Pope John-Paul II. It has been argued in this thesis that the thought of CS Lewis opens up possibilities for a Christian postmodernism and, by evaluating the attribution of postmodernism to John-Paul II in this chapter, it is hoped to throw further light on such possibilities.

10.3 CS Lewis and the postmodern Pope

10.3.1 Opposition to 'Enlightenment' rationalism in Pope John Paul II and CS Lewis

In *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (John-Paul II, 1994), a chapter is devoted to the development and influence of modern thought, as well as the flaws which John-Paul II perceives in it. Despite Lewis's firmly avowed Protestantism (see eg Lewis, 1969), there are a number of reasons which make the Pope's treatment of modernity a useful starting point in leading on to a final discussion of the work of CS Lewis in this thesis. In *Postmodernism for Beginners* (Appignanesi & Garratt, 1995 - but significantly with acknowledgment of assistance by Ziauddin Sardar) - a succinct but wide-ranging guide is provided to the topic of postmodernism, which, in its concluding pages, portrays Pope John-Paul II together with Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan as one type of embodiment of postmodernism. Despite the scathing attack of Sardar elsewhere on Don Cupitt's brand of postmodernism (Sardar, 1998), this characterisation of the Pope could very well have been made by Cupitt (1998) in respect of his category of 'right postmodernism'. Earlier in this thesis it was

mentioned that CS Lewis, too, would be regarded by Cupitt as a prime example of this type of postmodernism, but it was argued there that this categorisation of Lewis with the neo-conservative attempt to cling to and impose lost certainties would be superficial and erroneous. It will be shown in this chapter that this judgement is equally inaccurate with regard to John-Paul II. There are other reasons for recognising a commonality in the positions of John-Paul II and CS Lewis, not least among them the present Pope's frequent quotation of Lewis in his previous academic role (Wilson, 1991). Also, in view of the case made in this thesis for a connection between Lewis's thought and the Eastern Christian tradition, John-Paul II's personal interest in the recognition of the place of the Eastern Churches within a re-unified Christianity (Kwitny, 1998) is significant - and so too are the continual parallel references to the Eastern and Western traditions in the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994), in which the hand of the Pope must be seen as a major influence according to Kwitny. But the essential affinity between Lewis and John-Paul II lies in their common critical response to modern thought, a response which shares a common rootedness in the Christian intellectual heritage. Apart from all this, though, Pope John-Paul II has given an account of the relationship between faith and reason in the Encyclical Letter *Fides et Ratio* (John-Paul II, 1998) which is written in conscious awareness of the postmodern challenge to reason. Despite all the qualification of reason which has been presented in the discussion of CS Lewis's work in this thesis, it has been emphasised that Lewis allowed a validity to reason which diverges firmly from the evaluation of reason in 'deconstructive' postmodernism, and in this John-Paul II heartily concurs.

While Lewis did show a positive appreciation of Catholicism (Moynihan, 1987), his opinion was not unmixed (Lewis, 1990a). But, if Lewis were living today, his Protestant sensitivities may have been assuaged by the Pope's affirmation of the necessity that, "for human knowledge and human action a certain *dialectic* is present" (1994:153). Indeed, a link between this understanding of John-Paul II and Lewis's views on the presence of truth in positions as opposed as those of More and Tyndale, can be discerned (Lewis, 1955;

Moynihan, 1987). John-Paul II stresses, as does Lewis (1955), that in the first place the divisions of Christianity must be seen as an evil, but expresses his trust that God brings good out of evil. He goes beyond a simplistic interpretation of this trust: in addition to the historical causes of division, which would be accounted for by human obtuseness and sin, he states that, "It is legitimate, however, to wonder if there is perhaps a *metahistorical reason as well*" (John-Paul II, 1994:152-3). In view of the significance of this position of John-Paul II in complementing what was described in previous chapters as Lewis's notion of 'the decentred centre', the rest of the Pope's statement is reproduced in detail here (all italics are in the original):

"Could it not be that these divisions have been *a path continually leading the Church to discover the untold wealth contained in Christ's Gospel and in the redemption accomplished by Christ?* Perhaps all this wealth would not have come to light otherwise. ... Didn't the Holy Spirit in His 'divine condescendence' take this into consideration? It is necessary *for humanity to achieve unity through plurality, to learn to come together in one Church even while presenting a plurality of ways of thinking and acting, of cultures and civilisations.* Wouldn't such a way of looking at things be, in a certain sense, more consonant with the wisdom of God, with His goodness and providence?"

(John-Paul II, 1994:153)

The Pope's argument here might easily be dismissed by unsympathetic critics as an attempt to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat in the face of the irremediable "collapse of unity" (Degenaar, 1996); not merely the collapse of the unity of medieval Christendom but the far more pervasive collapse of the unity of truth, afflicting not only modernity, in Degenaar's view, but equally traditional Christianity, by the inescapable pluralism apparent in the postmodern vision of the world. But the principle of a 'necessary dialectic', of truth available only through pluralism, is merely a corollary to Lewis's principle of 'the decentred centre' of truth - a principle which was enunciated in the early 1950s, a time before the realities of a pluralistic world had begun to impact fully on Western thought, especially in Anglo-American society. Cupitt (1997) identifies it as the time of an easily held, comfortable conservatism; the time, Cupitt confesses, of his own conversion to a

conservative Christianity. Cupitt himself notes that this was a time of triumphalism, not of seeking a way out of defeat, especially, it might be expected, for one as allegedly traditionalist as Lewis. In any event, despite strong counter trends in the history of Catholicism, there are more venerable sources in the Christian tradition than Lewis for the Pope's recognition of the reality and importance of diversity in the human endeavour of attempting to grasp truth (Versfeld, 1990).

The affinity between the positions of John-Paul II and Lewis is brought into sharp relief when we consider one of the major charges brought against the Pope by Kwitny (1998), a biographer who, although neither a Catholic nor a conservative, is otherwise generally sympathetic in his treatment. Kwitny is almost plaintive in his repeated observations of how, in his view, the Pope proved incapable of understanding American attitudes because of his failure to grasp American attachment to the 'Enlightenment', a stream whose course (Kwitny appears to imagine) had largely by-passed Poland and Karol Wojtyla. Indeed, Kwitny appears to give some corroboration to Peters' (1999) assertion of the continuing dominance of 'Enlightenment' thought in the USA. Certainly Kwitny is oblivious to the possibility that the Pope, rather than being out of touch with the intellectual developments of the last two centuries, might have been fully aware of them but may have been wishing to challenge both American Catholics and American society in general to reconsider their attachment to 'Enlightenment' principles. Even in his discussion of the encyclical *Veritatis Splendor*, where Kwitny does raise some cogent points, he does not get to the heart of the issue regarding the failure of the 'Enlightenment project', proclaimed so loudly, from a different perspective, by secular postmodernists. In Kwitny's exasperation at his perception of the Pope's inability to appreciate the 'Enlightenment', one detects the same kind of complaint as that directed by Wain (1979) against Lewis for his self-proclaimed 'dinosaur' status, something which, despite its melodramatic quality, did convey Lewis's consciousness of his divergence from modern intellectual developments flowing from the 'Enlightenment'. But, on the evidence of Kwitny's own account of the Pope's intellectual life, it is clear that John-Paul II displayed a thorough familiarity with the thought flowing from the

'Enlightenment' and, perhaps much more than in the case of Lewis (Wain, 1979), showed a positive, although critical, readiness to adopt it where it could be seen to follow a line consistent with Catholic thought.

In the Pope's discussion of modern thought, in *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, its origins are traced back to Descartes, whose philosophy represents a significant point on the way to the 'Enlightenment'. But, while Descartes sought to provide a new intellectual foundation for the Catholic faith in the modern age, the strong tendency of the 'Enlightenment' was to reject the God of Christian orthodoxy. As John-Paul II (1994:52-3) points out, though, this turning away from the God of the Christian tradition did not "bring about a rupture with a God who exists outside of the world". In fact, the God retained in 'Enlightenment' deism, often more as a concession to social opinion than out of conviction, was "decidedly a God outside of the world":

"The rationalism of the Enlightenment was able to accept a God outside of the world primarily because it was an unverifiable hypothesis. It was crucial, however, that such a God be expelled from the world." (John-Paul II: 1994:53)

It is very important to note the concordance between the Pope's view of the development of modern thought, here, and the postmodern attack on the notion of a God 'off the planet', which was mentioned earlier in this thesis. But modern thought, in disposing of the presence of God in the world, had (as has been repeatedly emphasised in this thesis) presumed to retain the rational faculty which had hitherto been regarded as contingent on God. Thus modern humanity was, in its own eyes, freed to attempt to fulfill its self-appointed calling of living by reason alone, within the framework of a naturalistic consciousness. The 'uselessness of God' (in the phrase of John-Paul II), within that framework, constituted a functional atheism which led inevitably to an actual atheism in the further development of 'Enlightenment' modernism. That atheism was accompanied by the emptying, referred to by Lewis (1986b), of all spiritual reality and all meaning from the universe. The meaning that remained was not a meaning grounded in a God who, though transcendent, was also intimately involved in his creation. This had been the medieval

Christian vision, according to which, in the philosophy of St Thomas, humanity can reason and can know by virtue of divine Reason (Copleston, 1955). It is in this light that we must read the commendation of Thomism by John-Paul II (1998) in his discussion of the relationship of faith and reason to which we will proceed in the next section.

As we have seen, whatever the reservations of Lewis towards Scholasticism in general and Aquinas in particular (Griffiths, 1979), Lewis upholds the validity of reason staunchly even though he recognises its limitations. We must recall here Lewis's understanding of myth and the function of the imagination as an 'organ of meaning', as well as the belief of Lewis (quoted in Harwood, 1979:26) that the "symbols presented by imagination at its height", present to us as much of "the superintelligible reality as we can get while we retain our present form of consciousness". Lewis's case for the relation of myth to reality, and the operation of imagination in apprehending reality, must be seen alongside his defence of reason. This 'unpostmodern' evaluation of reason must be understood in the context of Lewis's view that reason occupies a valid but lesser place in relation to other faculties - as in the Eastern Christian understanding of the relationship of the rational faculty to the *nous* or 'spiritual intellect' (Frank, 1999). The capacity of reason, and the degree to which any estimate of it must be qualified, is also considered by Pope John-Paul II (1998) in *Fides et Ratio*. There is a great deal to the Pope's thought in this encyclical letter but only that which is particularly relevant to a final assessment on the status of reason in relation to CS Lewis and postmodernism will be considered here.

10.3.2 The capacity and limitations of reason in *Fides et Ratio*

Many of the themes pursued by CS Lewis in his treatment of the flaws of modern thought are immediately apparent in the discussion of reason by John-Paul II but, writing in the late 1990s, the Pope is able to set his discussion firmly in the context of the issues raised by postmodernism. After noting the ambiguities in the usage of the term 'postmodernity', he states unequivocally, "One thing, however, is certain: the currents of thought which claim to be postmodern merit appropriate attention" (vii, 91). For, since the nineteenth century,

“The affirmation of the principle of immanence [of reason], central to the rationalist argument, has provoked a radical questioning of claims once thought indisputable. In response, currents of irrationalism arose even as the baselessness of the demand that reason be absolutely self-grounded was being critically demonstrated.”

Thus John-Paul II sees the postmodern challenge to reason as the reaction against modern rationalism’s claim for the autonomous or self-grounded status of reason. Like Lewis, and like the mystical theological tradition of the Christian East, John-Paul II repudiates any absolutist rationalism. It has been suggested in Chapter Four that it is this position *vis-a-vis* reason that may render the postmodern challenge to reason ineffectual in relation to Eastern Christian thought. While Schrag (1992), operating within the modernist framework of immanent rationality, attempts his defence of the *Resources of Rationality* through an appeal to ‘transverse rationality’, the Christian tradition, represented in *Fides et Ratio*, as also in Lewis, looks to resources of rationality which do not presuppose any inherently metaphysically privileged position of humanity through self-grounded, immanent reason. In a manner recollective of the place of ‘Myth become Fact’ in Lewis’s thought, the Pope sees the Incarnation as establishing the ground for human beings to know “the ultimate truth about their own life and about the goal of history”(i, 12). But, apart from this grounding of truth and reason in God, transcendent, immanent, and incarnate, John-Paul II accords them their nearer source in the historical process, that is, in tradition.

In the conclusion to Chapter Four it was noted that the issue of tradition was yet another facet of Eastern Christian thought which provided occasion for it to be considered postmodern. But the discussion of tradition was not followed up there with reference to the possible impact of Eastern Christianity on the thought of CS Lewis. However, tradition is also a crucial element in Catholic thought and so it is appropriate that it should be addressed at this point. If anything has characterised modern thought it has been its antipathy to tradition. The related principles of the autonomy of the individual and the autonomy of reason, together with the disparagement of the Middle Ages by early modern thinkers, united in the framework of modern thought effectively to exclude the possibility that the past might afford a knowledge of truth. A positive evaluation of the past as a source of

understanding has already been observed in Lewis's recommendation of the reading of 'old books' but in this Lewis is not making any claim for tradition itself. He is merely advocating the corrective effect which immersion in the thought of other ages has on the otherwise inevitable cognitive hegemony of contemporary thought: the inadequacies and flaws of the thought of any age, including the present age, are highlighted in the contrast with that of other ages, thus providing a means for them to be balanced or cancelled. The charge of Bede Griffiths, cited elsewhere in this thesis, that Lewis's appreciation of tradition was deficient, does not negate this point of Lewis. It does point to a possible limitation, though; one which may (in the view of Griffiths, 1979, for example) find necessary augmentation in the Catholic understanding. In his understanding of Christian truth Lewis would seem to be closer to the Eastern Orthodox position than the purely Protestant position of *sola scriptura* which often in practice appears to have taken the outcomes of the Great Ecumenical Councils for granted without acknowledging their status as 'Tradition', alongside, even though dependent on, scripture. Although, like Orthodoxy, firmly upholding the authority of the Great Councils, Lewis is unwilling to accede to the Catholic understanding of tradition as he perceives it: in an address to Catholics (Lewis, 1990a), on the opportunities and problems of re-union, he argues that to embrace the Church of Rome is not only to accept the doctrines which she has enunciated but also to commit oneself to the acceptance of any which might be formulated in the future - something which Lewis believes is beyond what he is able to give. There is a great deal here which can be debated, much of which might find a satisfactory resolution in the pronouncements of Vatican II on the relationship between scripture and tradition (Panimolle, 1990). But it is also in the development of hermeneutical understandings of truth, also largely subsequent to Lewis's death, that augmentation of Lewis's position on tradition and truth may be sought. Here we may return to the position of John-Paul II in *Fides et Ratio*, in which he makes specific reference to the hermeneutical approach in his final chapter. Contemporary developments in hermeneutics are not specific to Catholicism but are nevertheless largely amenable to the Catholic position on tradition. In *Fides et Ratio* John-Paul II attacks the claims of historicism (in the sense of historical relativism) and states, with reference to the biblical

texts, and of the Gospels in particular, that

“the use of a hermeneutic open to the appeal of metaphysics can show how it is possible to move from the historical and contingent circumstances in which the texts developed, to the truth which they express, a truth transcending those circumstances. Truth can never be confined to time and culture; in history it is known, but it also reaches beyond history.” (vii, 95)

John-Paul II acknowledges the existence of the hermeneutical problem but believes it is not insoluble. There are many issues involved in this which require far more than the scope of one thesis to be addressed but, without being drawn into elaboration too detailed for our present purpose, attention is drawn here to the hermeneutical understanding because of the relevance which it holds for the question of faith and reason in relation to the thought of CS Lewis. Two quotations cited previously must be recalled in this regard: firstly that of Ricoeur, in McGrath (1990), that “a human being discovers his infinitude in the fact that, first of all, he finds himself within a tradition or traditions”; and secondly that of Lewis, in Griffiths (1979), that “We have no abiding city even in philosophy: all passes except the Word.” To Lewis, the *Logos*, the eternal Divine Reason, is the Presence within all experience, a Reality available to, but too often not appropriated by human beings immersed in the changing scenes of human history and the partial constructions of truth which they achieve in those circumstances. But the ‘stab’ of Joy, still finds its target in human imaginations and hearts even as they grope amidst the “shadows and conjectures” of truth as it exists in this world. As we have seen earlier, this is all that St Maximus the Confessor, will allow of truth to human beings, for, as he might have commented along with Lewis, “all passes except the Word”. All this stands in stark contrast to the claims of modernity for the power of self-grounded reason, attacked by John-Paul II and equally by CS Lewis. With regard to Ricoeur’s point, Lewis would be firm in his affirmation that he stands squarely in the Christian tradition. It would seem, though, that, in order to develop the full implications of that stance, it is necessary to have recourse, as Pope John-Paul II does, to a hermeneutical understanding which does more than merely offer correctives to contemporary thought from this or that previous age. Instead, a cumulative effect with regard to truth may be

recognised, one which John-Paul II does not at all restrict to Catholicism in its immediate sense. Thus, in the Pope's view, the religion of Israel, (particularly as expressed in the Wisdom Literature) which precedes the Church in the tradition, incorporates yet other prior elements:

“What is striking about these biblical texts, if they are read without prejudice, is that they embody not only the faith of Israel, but also the treasury of cultures and civilisations which have long vanished. As if by special design, the voices of Egypt and Mesopotamia sound again ... “ (*Fides et Ratio* ii,16)

But to John-Paul II, as to Lewis, Revelation, and especially the Incarnation, is the crucial element.

“Christian Revelation is the true lodestar of men and women as they strive to make their way amidst the pressures of an immanentist habit of mind and the constrictions of a technocratic logic.” (i,15)

But God speaks also outside of specifically Christian revelation so that the Pope (certainly not without precedent in longstanding Christian understandings) is able to recognise the validity of other traditions of truth outside the Judaeo-Greco-Christian stream:

“My thoughts turn immediately to the lands of the East, so rich in religious and philosophical traditions of great antiquity. ... it is the duty of Christians now to draw from this rich heritage the elements compatible with their faith in order to enrich Christian thought. ... [But] in engaging great cultures for the first time, the Church cannot abandon what she has gained from her inculturation in the world of Greco-Latin thought. To reject this heritage would be to deny the providential plan of God who guides his Church down the paths of time and history” (vi, 72)

In an interpretation somewhat different in emphasis to that of Griffiths (1983), referred to in the previous chapter, John-Paul II goes on directly to relate his comments to the Church of the future “who will judge herself enriched by all that comes from today's engagement with Eastern cultures”. Although it may be argued that John-Paul II goes beyond the limits of Lewis's thought here, his principle of the ‘necessary dialectic of truth’, in *Fides et Ratio* as much as in *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, is fully consonant with the position of Lewis, described in this thesis. The question of the resources for the further development of

Christian tradition, which exist in the separate traditions of the religions of the East, raised by John-Paul II, underlines the importance of tradition as a dynamic factor in the human grasp of truth.

The major stimulus to the recent development of hermeneutics has been provided by the work of Gadamer (1975). Eagleton (1996:62), in the specific context of literary criticism, sums up Gadamer's view as follows:

All interpretation is situational, shaped and constrained by the historically relative criteria of a particular culture; there is not the possibility of knowing the literary text 'as it is'."

What is applied here to texts can be extended to all interpretation of reality: there is no understanding outside of a tradition. But Eagleton goes on scathingly to attack Gadamer's view of tradition:

"Gadamer can equably surrender himself and literature to the winds of history because these scattered leaves will always in the end come home - and they will do so because beneath history, silently spanning past, present and future, runs a unifying essence known as 'tradition'."

Eagleton contrasts the discontinuities and conflicts of history with Gadamer's "grossly complacent view of history" as embodying a mainstream tradition in which all interpretation can have its meaning. From the position of John-Paul II both Eagleton's Marxism and the historicist connotations of Gadamer's view of tradition would be judged inadequate: his argument would be that only the Incarnation, and the other revelatory activity of God, can ultimately give validity to the truth of tradition. But, once this is accepted, then (to revert to Lewis's terms) the same divine Presence, present in every age but only partially apprehended in any age, speaks with the same voice to any who have ears to hear. Here is the source of the unifying element in tradition. Furthermore, and of particular importance in the thought of Lewis, even the discontinuities and conflicts of history can be accommodated within this understanding of the Presence of the 'decentred centre' - Lewis's example of Tyndale and More serves to illustrate this once again.

Modern claims made in respect of reason are rejected by John-Paul II but the theme of *Fides et Ratio* is the importance of reason. The Pope is at pains to commend the philosophy of St Thomas Aquinas, not to impose a philosophical strait-jacket on the thought of the Church but, rather, because Aquinas is the model for an approach in which reason and faith stand in a complementary relationship to each other. Perhaps even more than John-Paul II, CS Lewis sees the limitations of reason but he is nevertheless fervent in upholding reason for the validity which it does have. For reason is the 'organ of truth' and, despite St Maximus's evaluation of that truth as 'shadows and conjectures', it serves to point to Reality Itself, just as the more ephemeral, fleeting stabs of joy also do according to Lewis. Significantly, Cardinal Ratzinger, special confidante of John-Paul II (Kwitny, 1998), refers to Lewis's concern with truth in his reflections on the Encyclical *Fides et Ratio* (Ratzinger, 2000). Ratzinger cites Lewis's *Screwtape Letters* on the 'historical point of view' of modern Western intellectuals:

"... the only question that no-one would certainly ever ask is whether what has been read is true; instead there would be questions about who influenced the writer, whether he is consistent with what he said in other books, how he influenced other writers etc." (Ratzinger, 2000:7)

When all other relevant factors have been taken into account, the question of truth remains, and in the discernment of truth reason is indispensable, to Lewis as to John-Paul II. But it is the mode of functioning of this 'organ of truth', as understood by Lewis, which contrasts with modern rationalism.

10.4 Imagination and faith balancing reason in the response of the whole person

If the modernist claims for reason are impossible, the nihilism of deconstructive postmodernism is equally a product of a limited vision. Reason has its validity, only has validity, in its relation to other faculties. We must recall again Lewis's observation in his letter to Harwood (1979:26) that, "No one is more convinced than I that reason is utterly inadequate to the richness and spirituality of things". For Lewis, reason must be balanced by its relation to imagination, but both find their proper response, as testified to in Lewis's

poem 'Reason' (Lewis, 1964c), in coming together in faith:

Set on the soul's acropolis the reason stands
A virgin arm'd, commercing with celestial light,
And he who sins against her has defiled his own
Virginity: no cleansing makes his garment white;
So clear is reason. But how dark, imagining,
Warm, dark, obscure and infinite, daughter of Night;
Dark is her brow, the beauty of her eyes with sleep
Is loaded, and her pains are long and her delight.
Tempt not Athene. Wound not in her fertile pains
Demeter, nor rebel against her mother-right.
Oh who will reconcile in me both maid and mother,
Who make in me a concord of the depth and height?
Who make the imagination's dim exploring touch
Ever report the same as intellectual sight?
Then could I truly say, and not deceive,
Then wholly say, that I BELIEVE.

But once the 'arm'd virgin' is sundered from the warmth of imagining, and from their reconciliation in faith, then joy is lost as the sword of reason, unmitigated, reduces all the world to barren emptiness. This, at least, is the story of modern history, told in Webb's *Flight from Reason*, the revulsion from the cold, dry rationalism of nineteenth century modernism, which drove many into the warm southern swamps of the occult and spiritualism, visited by Lewis (1977) too in his search for Joy in *The Pilgrim's Regress*.

A further observation from *Fides et Ratio* (i,5) is relevant in moving to conclude this chapter:

“Abandoning the investigation of being, modern philosophical research has concentrated instead upon human knowing”

John-Paul II (1994) identifies Descartes' *cogito ergo sum* with the origins of modern thought, and it is in Descartes that we see the application of a rationalist epistemology which leads in modern thought to a divorce of knowing from being. The source of this divorce, that is the divorce of head from heart, has already been described in this thesis in quotes cited from von Bathasar (1989), as well as from Gaybba (1998) in his account of the eclipse of monastic theology by Scholastic theology. But though the potential for this fatal separation of faith and reason is found within Thomism, particularly (Fremantle, 1954), St Thomas's philosophy does not *require* this fall, and thus Pope John-Paul II can still commend Thomism. And in discussing faith he observes that belief is essentially personal, not in the sense which this takes on in modern individualism, but in the sense of the personalism which is discussed elsewhere in this thesis:

“In believing we entrust ourselves to the knowledge acquired by other people. ... Belief is often more humanly richer than mere evidence, because it involves an interpersonal relationship and brings into play not only a person's capacity to know but also the deeper capacity to entrust oneself to others.” (*Fides et Ratio*:iii, 32)

Ultimately this personal aspect goes back, in the Christian understanding, to the personalism of the doctrine of the Trinity and the Personal Presence of God in human life, most outstandingly in the Incarnation. Thus McGrath (1994:178), writing with reference to the hermeneutical understanding of Christian doctrine, states that we deal there with “communally transmitted authority of the past, supremely the history of Jesus of Nazareth”. The personal, or interpersonal, quality of faith is also stressed by Lewis in his paper ‘On obstinacy in belief’ (Lewis, 1965c:71), in a way which complements the Pope's position:

“Unbelievers very pardonably get the impression that an adherence to faith is like [trying to preserve a hypothesis], because they meet Christianity, if at all, mainly in apologetic works. And there, of course, the existence and beneficence of God must appear as a speculative question like any other. Indeed it is a speculative question as long as it is a question at all. But once it has been answered in the affirmative, you get quite a new situation. To believe that God - at least *this* God - exists is to believe

that you as a person now stand in the presence of God as a Person. What would, a moment before, have been variations in opinion, now become variations in your personal attitude to a Person. You are no longer faced with an argument which demands your assent, but with a person who demands your confidence.”

Nietzsche, and the postmodernism which takes its inspiration from him, applies ‘philosophy with a hammer’ to the pretensions of modern rationalism, and the premise of disembodied, autonomous reason on which it is based. Lewis provides an alternative ‘participatory epistemology’, not exactly that of Steiner or Tarnas, in which reason, as one faculty amongst others, is embedded in the lives of whole human beings, who are not mere autonomous individuals but are themselves embedded in community and tradition. Pope John-Paul II, with the benefit of direct experience of contemporary postmodernism, provides insights for a Christian postmodernism which are consonant with, but go beyond those of Lewis. Perhaps both Lewis and John-Paul II may be recognised not only as exponents of tradition but also as prophets of postmodernism. That dual role involves proclaiming a Christianity not wedded to the modern worldview with which it has co-existed over the last few centuries, although not rejecting it out of the obscurantist traditionalism with which both Lewis and John-Paul II are charged by their detractors.

An essential element in the Christianity proclaimed by both these exponents of tradition is rationality, not merely the rationality of the theoretical reason but of the practical reason too, by which the universal moral law is grasped (Lewis, 1978). As we have seen earlier in this chapter, morality evokes an even stronger negative reaction than reason from Nietzsche, the first prophet of postmodernism. But, as has been shown in this chapter, the note of joy, which is so vital to Nietzsche’s philosophising, sounds clearly in the work of Lewis also. For this is the paradoxical CS Lewis, in whose thought are reconciled morality and joy, and reason and imagination, and all of these together in the exercise of faith, itself reconciled with action, by which humanity responds to the divine Presence, immanent yet also transcendent. As with Nietzsche, and Richard Tarnas, ‘deconstructive’ and affirmative elements are aspects of the same ‘postmodernism’ in CS Lewis. For Lewis, the final reconciliation of all things lies in union with the divine, but this is not dissolution of the ego

in the impersonal ground of being of the Great Mother, as in the thought of Tarnas. Rather, it is to be drawn into the Great Dance of the life of God - an ultimately Personal reality - which is the positive content of Lewis's affirmation and proclamation.

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