

C. S. Lewis and the Anatomy of Pleasure

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In the enormously popular epistolary novel by C. S. Lewis of 1942, The Screwtape Letters, Screwtape gets upset with his nephew Wormwood for several blunders Wormwood makes as he tries to lure his "patient" into the bureaucracy of Hell. One mistake that especially upsets Screwtape is allowing the "patient" to engage in pleasurable activities. Screwtape's goals are threatened by pleasure. Screwtape makes his attitude toward pleasure clear when he counts among the really solid accomplishments of Hell the secure reputation that Puritanism has among modern people that it was joyless. In The Screwtape Letters and in other texts, such as Perelandra and The Four Loves, Lewis reveals his strong interest in pleasure. He says, in one of his essays, "We have had enough, once and for all, of Hedonism--the gloomy philosophy which says that Pleasure is the only good. But we have hardly yet begun what may be called Hedonics, the science or philosophy of Pleasure." What I want to do this evening is to piece together from moments in several of his works Lewis's implicit theory of pleasure.

There are three reasons why pleasure is central to Lewis's overall project. The first reason is that pleasure draws the attention of a person outward toward something external. It counters self-preoccupation. This is particularly true of unexpected pleasures. But even need-based pleasures, such as the delight a thirsty person takes in a drink of water, orients a person outwardly. The person appreciates something that comes from without. Pleasure is consistent with Lewis's larger project because he is eager to counter the tendency of people, especially modern people, to be self-centered.

The second reason why pleasure is consistent with Lewis's overall project is that it

militates against the assumption, commonly held by modern people, that there is a gap between them and what lies outside them, between facts and values, between things and people's evaluations of them. But in moments of pleasure, this supposed gap disappears. In a moment of pleasure a person is aware of continuity between what something is and a person's evaluation of it. A thirsty person who drinks water does not think that the value of the water is projected on it. The person thinks that the water is very good indeed. Experiences of pleasure, then, like experiences of the sublime to which Lewis also repeatedly gives attention, cause the gap that we assume exists between things or events and our evaluation of them to disappear.

The third reason why pleasure is consistent with Lewis's overall project is that it allows for edification, for an upward or expanded sense of the world. The thirsty person does not take the drink of water as an isolated act. The person thinks of the water as something that is part of a larger world that is prepared to sustain and restore him or her. Because of the water, the person has a newly recognized, positive appreciation of the larger world.

All three of these points are crucial to Lewis's overall project. 1) He wants very much, as I said, to counter the self-preoccupation that is encouraged in and by our culture. 2) He wants very much to counter the idea that there is no real relation between me and what lies outside of me, especially between things or events and my evaluations of them. 3) And he wants to counter the tendency, also encouraged by our culture, to define and describe things in a downward way by processes of reduction and simplification rather than in an upward way by processes of expansion and amplification. Indeed, it would be difficult to find things more important than these three both for understanding Lewis and his efforts to give an adequate account of our world and of our place in and relations to it. Pleasure lies, then, very close to his major concern to articulate a Christian view of human life in the context of present day culture.

We should look at three aspects of Lewis's theory of pleasure. First, we should see why pleasure is edifying. Second, we should examine the relation of pleasure to other positive experiences, especially to joy, to gaining knowledge, and to reading. Finally, we should see how and why pleasure is distorted in modern culture.

I

First, then, why pleasures are edifying? There are three reasons. As I already said, pleasures, especially when they are unexpected, draw attention outward. They remind us that there exists outside our needs and interests a world of significance and delight into which we can be drawn, by which we can be sustained, and for which we can be grateful. Pleasures are edifying, first of all, then, because they bring us into a larger and more abundant world.

Pleasures are edifying for a second reason. They allow a person to become more him- or herself. In a moment of pleasure a person has a richer sense of identity because the occasion of pleasure awakens an unrecognized potential to appreciate that delight. Pleasures bring latent capacities to awareness. The significance of pleasure is two-sided, then. It conjoins something delightful that comes from the outside with a newly realized capacity to enjoy it that is awakened from within. Pleasure is a compound formed by the value of the external object or event and the awakened potential of a person to recognize and appreciate it.

Pleasures are edifying for a third reason. They are not closed and self-contained. Rather, they open outward to yet higher pleasures. So, in the midst of a highly engaging and enjoyable event someone in the group may say, "Oh, if only Bill and Sarah were here! How much they would have enjoyed this! And how much they would have added to our enjoyment!" A statement like that does not express dissatisfaction, as though the occasion was deficient due to the absence of Bill and Sarah. No, it recognizes that the occasion is on a kind of track that points outward

toward possibilities that would be even more enjoyable.

Pleasurable moments are those, then, that draw attention away from self and toward a valuable world outside, that awaken a latent potential in a person to enjoy and appreciate something, and that point beyond themselves to yet more fulfilling moments. Another way to say this is that pleasure when it is most itself is a gift. This could be put the other way around. Receiving gifts carries the most potential for being an occasion of pleasure. We'll say more about this at the end. In any event, we now can also see that the opposite is true: Pleasures that are planned, even more, pleasures that are controlled, tend to be less like pleasure, tend to become not pleasures at all but something else.

II

Now that we have seen the constitutive ingredients of pleasure, we can compare pleasure with several other positive moments in human experience to which Lewis gives attention. The first of these is the experience of "joy," an experience to which he gives attention at various points but most fully in his autobiography, Surprised by Joy. Joy is that exhilarating moment when one is drawn out of oneself by the lure of something grander and higher. Joy also awakens deep desires and potentials in a person, potentials of which the person was not previously aware. And joy also contains an element of pain, a sense that there is a level of participation in the something more or something other that cannot be attained or received. You can see that I have drawn the components of pleasure in parallel relation to the experience of joy. Joy is a more intense, more elusive and more infrequent sense of participation in something received than is pleasure. Experiences of pleasure are more common, more precise, and often more physical than experiences of joy.

I think that it is fair and potentially important to extend Lewis's theory of pleasure in the other direction toward still less exceptional and engrossing experiences than pleasure and joy. I

think that Lewis's scattered interests in pleasure also suggest an incipient epistemology, a theory, that is, of knowledge and how we come to know things. Lewis attacks the dominant epistemology of the modern period, especially in The Abolition of Man. He implies that this epistemology posits a gap between minds and what lies outside of them. While he accepts scientific and rational strategies that as much as possible strive for objectivity, strive to clarify "facts," he rejects the move of taking those strategies, valuable as they may be for some kinds of situations, and turning them into an account of how we are in the world. When that happens we think of all occasions in which we learn something as occasions by which we have brought entities or events in our world across a gap and into our mental orbit. But if we take pleasure as our guide, we can say that learning something, having the experience that we now know something, is an experience that has a similar structure to pleasure. Learning something is a pleasurable experience for the same reasons. We sense continuity between ourselves and something outside us. Our capacity to know has been awakened by something that we have encountered. And gaining knowledge satisfies us but also kindles our awareness that the world in which we find ourselves beckons us to learn even more about it and to expand our capacity to know it.

I also think that there is another experience that Lewis turns to that can be illuminated by placing it in the context of joy, pleasure, and knowing. I mean the experience of reading. Remember that one of the pleasures that Wormwood's "patient" experiences and that upsets Screwtape is reading a good book. Lewis's theory of reading is lodged primarily in his rather elusive little book, An Experiment in Criticism. I wish that he had spent more time on this topic, because today it not only is widely discussed but it is contested topic. So, it is good to see what Lewis says and implies about reading, since it may contribute something to that debate.

The first thing to see is that reading for Lewis is relational, a transaction between the reader and the text. This means that reading is something that not only the reader does but also that happens to the reader. Since the reader is the only one of the two involved in the transaction who can make the first move, it is necessary, for Lewis, that the reader put him- or herself in a vulnerable position in relation to the text. This is similar to what we have seen about the experiences of joy, pleasure, and knowing. A person in reading is oriented first of all toward something outside as to something of potential value or significance. When Lewis describes this act of readiness or vulnerability, he uses quite striking language. He says the following: "In love, in virtue, in the pursuit of knowledge, and in the reception of the arts, we are doing this [i.e., we are correcting or countering the confinement of the self and are healing the loneliness that self-containment creates]. Obviously this process can be described either as an enlargement or as a temporary annihilation of the self." That is strong language. He is willing to say that when a person begins to read the person puts him- or herself in a position in which as much as possible the self is annihilated. He goes on to say an even more surprising thing. He says, "But that is an old paradox; 'he that loseth his life shall save it.'" He uses an important saying of Jesus in the Gospels to illuminate what he means by reading.

There is, for Lewis, it should be clear, no break or opposition between readers and texts. We are always already in an actual and potential relation with the text. A reading occurs when the vulnerability and receptivity of the reader are not only met by the text but rewarded and transformed by the reading. A good reading is one, therefore, in which potentials both in the reader and in the text are actualized in the reading. Let me say, if I may, that I think that this theory of reading, however elusive it may seem, is more complex and adequate than theories that divide participants in recent debates on reader-response and on issues regarding the literary canon.

Those participants tend to place the authority of reading either in the text or in the reader. Lewis, because he denies the subject/object gap that determines these two options and their incompatibility, offers an alternative, a basically relational and eventful model.

Having placed the self in a vulnerable position, the reader is awakened to recognize the force and significance of the text in ways that are not immediately apparent to someone who more casually or in a more controlling manner reads the text. As he puts it, like love, virtue, the pursuit of knowledge, and reception of art, reading requires an initial act of receptivity and vulnerability in relation to what potentially may happen. This does not mean that Lewis is attributing to reading attitudes and actions derived from specifically religious acts, like reading scripture or receiving the sacrament. As in all of his work, Lewis moves the other way. We know what religious acts such as reading Scripture or receiving a sacrament are because we know what it is like to read, love, do virtuous things, and view art. All reveal the old paradox, "he that loseth his life shall save it."

In his treatment of all of these experiences, Lewis reveals his high evaluation of needs and desires that people bring to their encounters with the people, things, and events that constitute their world. Terribly unfortunate consequences arise from ignoring these desires and needs or from taking them as something less or other than what they are. He warns against this, for example, in Surprised by Joy. Lewis has strongly antagonistic attitudes towards the tendency in our culture, one particularly clear in academic culture, to treat experiences, especially positive experiences, as something less or other than they appear to be. Ironic, sardonic and derisive attitudes, a sophisticated hermeneutics of suspicion or coarse habits of ridicule, place an altogether unbearable burden on the human potential for edifying experiences. They not only undermine the occasions of such experiences but also cast acidic doubt on our capacities for joy,

pleasure, learning, and reading.

A good example of the habitually ironic or sardonic stance of modern culture is offered by Weston's assumption about Ransom's experiences on the planet Perelandra. The fact that Ransom has been with a beautiful, naked woman leads Weston to assume immediately that Ransom has been enjoying sexual acts with her. Ransom responds by saying that the situation, while sensual, has not occasioned sexual acts. Indeed, he implies that the situation provided by their being together is even more sensual for its not having been turned into such occasions. Contained in his response is the possibility that the need and desire for specific kinds of pleasures can be dissolved by and into more rich and complex states. Lewis calls this process or heightening in an essay named for the process, "Transposition." Modern people seem particularly unable to experience it. They may be so unable because they are too driven by anxiety to dissolve their needs and desires into something higher. This inability dooms them to a smaller and more meager rather than to a larger and richer world.

Lewis has theological bases for this move. Christianity takes moments of physical pleasure, such as eating, as pointing beyond themselves and taken up into the future of the final feast. What Lewis wants this alignment to do is to effect a radical alternative to our habits of reducing things to their immediate and physical possibilities. Rather than reducing complex and rich occasions into specific physical acts, physical acts are taken up and expanded by the larger and far more complex spiritual states in and by which they are transposed and fulfilled. Physical acts, then, become sacramental because they open out to and participate in more complex and even eschatological realities.

Another way of saying this is that as moderns we are accustomed to understanding and accounting for things by looking behind or below them. What is needed, according to Lewis, is

also to understand and account for things by looking ahead and above them. Unless we do so, we gradually and habitually deprive our experiences and our worlds of their capacity to point outside of and beyond themselves for their completion.

An additional, very good reason that Lewis provides for this change in orientation toward our world and our experiences within it is that when we chronically disdain and distrust our experiences and our world they begin to shrink. When we no longer treat our worlds as constituted by our relations, real and potential, with things, events and people but as alien to us, the people, events and entities of our world become objects to dominate or to fear. Domination and fear aggravate one another. The more alienated we are from our world the more we distrust it, and the more we distrust it the more we must dominate it. Our worlds, then, become confined to what we can control.

The people who live under the reign of the unbelieving King Miraz in Prince Caspian, for example, live in an increasingly constricted world, one that more and more they have come to fear. Since their relationships are exhausted by the options of dominating or fearing, they fear what they do not control. Fear is the companion of control, and both are obstacles to pleasure. One of the first things that Ransom has to get over, in the course of his development in the three parts of the space trilogy, is his fear.

III

The third thing I want to point out in Lewis's theory of pleasure is why and how pleasure goes wrong, goes sour. It is not unique to modern culture that pleasure can and does go awry. Indeed, Aristotle in his *Ethics* gives an extended analysis of how and why pleasure turns from something good into something bad. However, it seems that in our culture, according to Lewis, due to things that I already have mentioned, it is difficult for us to have experiences of pleasure

without turning them into something less than they potentially are and eventually into something bad.

The best way of seeing why and how pleasure goes awry is to examine Ransom's comments on repetition. Ransom encounters many delightful occasions and objects on Perelandra. One of them is the unexpected and unprecedented sensual delight he experiences in drinking the juice of a gourd. Ransom considers repeating the pleasure, but he somehow recognizes that it would be better not to repeat it. In fact, he goes so far as to suggest that repetition and the desire for repetition endanger pleasure and even constitute the root of evil. The reader is asked to conclude, I think, that there is for Lewis a close tie between repetition and the distortion or perversion of pleasure.

The thrust of Ransom's decision to avoid repetition is this: repeating the pleasure draws attention away from the object or occasion of pleasure and directs attention to the person's capacity to have the pleasurable experience. What almost inevitably happens then is that the value revealed and prized in the experience no longer is located in what the person receives but in the person's capacity to have pleasure. This happens for two reasons. First, there is for Lewis a contrary relation between experience and self-consciousness and, therefore, a contrary relation between self-consciousness and genuine pleasure. He says in Surprised by Joy, for example, "enjoyment and the contemplation of our inner activities are incompatible." This does not mean that for Lewis self-consciousness is always a bad thing; indeed, sometimes it's a very good thing. But it modifies, if it does not threaten, experiences of pleasure. Second, turning attention to my capacity to have pleasure distorts because it gives me the credit for the pleasurable experience. Pleasures then are shifted in their direction and consequence. Instead of leading me outside myself into a wider world, pleasures become ways by which I take the world into myself. Lewis

says, for example, also in Surprised by Joy: "This, I say, is the first and deadly error, which appears on every level of life and is equally deadly on all, turning...love into auto-eroticism." When a state of mind or the capacity to have pleasure becomes the focus of attention and the center of value, the orientation has radically shifted. Rather than being drawn by pleasure into a larger, richer world the person begins increasingly to draw the world into the self and to reduce the world to the terms of the self's pleasure-experiencing capabilities.

But Lewis implies more, I think. Since the capacity to have pleasure is of such value, the person turns toward the world as a potential for having the person's ability for experiencing pleasure reaffirmed and fed. Such a person is driven ever more energetically in this direction because the person is anxious lest this great value, namely, the capacity to have pleasurable experiences, will dwindle. The person begins to look for occasions or will try to create them that will test whether or not the capacity to have pleasure is still intact, occasions when the person will be delivered from the anxiety that the capacity for pleasure has been weakened or is disappearing. Repetition, then, becomes obsessive, and no experience will adequately do the job of putting that anxiety to rest. The more pleasurable experiences a person has the more important the capacity to have pleasure will become and the more anxious a person will be that that capacity may dwindle or be lost. Far from being drawn, by means of pleasure, into a larger and richer world, the person lives more and more in a smaller and more homogenized world. The person judges every occasion or object in terms of its ability to give the kind of pleasure the person needs to confirm that the capacity for pleasure is still operating. When that happens, pleasure is no longer pleasure. Pleasure is no longer the moment when a person is drawn out of self by something more that is given, no longer the moment when something within the person has been actualized in relation to something received, and no longer the moment that opens out

into something more. Rather pleasure becomes controlled and hoarded by the self.

Pleasure that turns attention toward the self becomes not pleasure but self-interest. To use a better term it becomes a form of narcissism. The image of pleasure or of the pleasurable self is sought as a substitute for pleasure. The distortion of pleasure, for Lewis, is not, as in Aristotle, excess of pleasure; it is, rather pleasure to which something has been done or something has been added. When that occurs we are not any longer talking about pleasure. In the disguise of pleasure the self-indulgent or narcissistic person draws the world into the self and reduces the world to that aspect of the self that needs most to be reassured and satisfied. Pleasure is taken over, in repetition, by power.

Pleasure goes sour or stops being pleasure not only when pleasure shifts attention away from the occasion or object of pleasure and to the self but also when moments of pleasure become divorced from the rest of experience. When Ransom on the planet Malachandra, talks with the hrossa about their sexual life, he learns that they engage in sexual activity infrequently even though they enjoy it very much. The reason why they do not have sex more often is that it is so closely related to and continuous with the rest of their experience. Their experiences of sexual pleasure, as, one could conclude, their experiences of pleasure of every kind, are not exceptions to the rest of their experiences but are epitomes, concentrated moments when what normally is true of their lives comes to expression or visibility. Lewis here wants us to understand, I think, that anticipations of pleasure and remembrances of it should permeate the rest of our encounters and transactions with our worlds. Pleasures should not be exceptional, cut off from ordinary living.

On the planet from which Ransom has come, our very own earth, more particularly Western culture, the relation of ordinary experiences to moments of pleasure assumed by the

hrossa on Malachandra is denied. Human experiences in Western culture ordinarily have nothing to do with pleasure in general or with human intimacy in particular. Human relations are, as Jean-Francois Lyotard contends that they not only are but should be, agonistic. He is really restating Thomas Hobbes assessment that human beings are in a state of constant conflict with one another. This notion is given another twist in the latter half of the nineteenth century by social Darwinists, who think of human society in terms of the supposed relations of animals to one another, namely, the survival of the strongest. Such notions are commonplace today, and you may encounter them or even hold them yourself—the notion, for example, that life is a zero-sum game. What you get I forfeit. My gain is your loss. Screwtape announces this view of things as the basis of the whole philosophy of Hell: “...the axiom that one thing is not another thing, and, specially, that one self is not another self. My good is my good and your good is yours. What one gains another loses. Even an inanimate object is what it is by excluding all other objects aside or by absorbing them. A self does the same. With beasts the absorption takes the form of eating; for us, it means the sucking of will and freedom out of a weaker self into a stronger. ‘To be’ means ‘to be in competition.’”

When we understand normal human relations and experiences to be marked by struggle and conflict, moments of pleasure become not only exceptional but also very important, especially if moments of pleasure that involve human intimacy. They become detached from their context; they become abstract. Moments of pleasure are related to nothing else except to one another. So, we develop a special and highly prized category of pleasurable moments that we recall, especially when we feel lonely and deprived, the exceptional, unrelated, and separate events we think of as pleasures. Pleasures become oases in a life that otherwise is a vast desert, respites in a life that otherwise is a great-big battle.

A striking instance of how we think this way is provided by the highly successful novel and film of a few years ago, "The English Patient." You remember that the setting of the story is warfare, and the location is the North African desert. That, of course, is all backdrop to the really important moments of the story, namely, isolated instances of human intimacy. These moments are exceptional not only because they have nothing in common with the war but also because they have nothing to do with the desert. They are all, if you remember, associated with water. A sharp contrast is established by the narrative between isolated moments of human intimacy, which are highly valued, and the general setting or context of human life, warfare and desert, which are sharply dis-valued.

Repetition, as a basis for distorting pleasure and the isolation of pleasure from the rest of experience, as a basis for distorting pleasure, exacerbate one another. I need to have moments of pleasure both to quiet my anxiety about the intact status of my capacity for pleasure and to deliver me from what I take to be the very grim business of the warfare of life in the desert of this world. For both reasons, then, I am led to view my world as something that as much as possible I should control and manipulate so that it will give me the pleasures, reassurances, and satisfactions that I so deeply need and desire.

Distorted pleasure and power are closely tied, then. Pleasure, because it depends on trust and vulnerability, is fraught with the danger of perversion by power. The temptation to control or manipulate and the danger of being controlled or manipulated are very great. But more than that, power gives its own distorted pleasures, especially for someone already marked by narcissism. Power allows a person to turn the circumstances around him or her into an image of the person's own needs and desires. Power allows the world increasingly to become an extension of the self.

When Ransom in Perelandra identifies repetition as the source of evil he remembers that the love of money has traditionally been taken as the source of evil. But he concludes that money is tied to repetition. And, indeed, it is. Money represents the power to subject my world to my control and to conform the world to my needs and desires. The power of money is so irresistible and obsessive because it is driven by an anxiety that is cut loose from any possible source of its abatement. One cannot have enough power either to satisfy the need to guarantee occasions of pleasure or the need to have sufficient power to struggle in the battle of life to secure oases of pleasure. Money is tied to power, power to pleasure and pleasure to the self. Money becomes a reflection of the self; it becomes not only crucial to the construction of the self but definitive of having a self at all.

While he does not so label it, the final state of pleasure that has been distorted by anxiety, by the separation of pleasure from the rest of experience, and by power, especially the power of money, begins very much to look like addiction. Lewis was well acquainted with addiction, having to deal with it as a constant in his brother's life. In any event, his description of distorted pleasure and of evil more generally often looks like a description of addiction. Not only does someone in advanced stages of pleasure-distortion manipulate his or her world to create the experience that quiets anxiety by offering the familiar and now desperately needed satisfaction but also the person thinks of every situation in terms of that possible yield. This produces a sharply reduced and focused world, and it ends in monotony, depression, and self-loathing. More and more of a person's interests become defined by the gratification of that need and nothing is too much to sacrifice for it. While the addict seems to be dependent on something outside the self--alcohol, gambling, sex, being noticed by others, power, for example--he or she is primarily oriented not to something outside but to that insatiable internal anxiety and need. It is not

surprising, then, that the narrator of *Perelandra* refers to Weston, that incarnation of evil, as having an "intoxicated will."

IV

In order to resist the tendencies in ourselves and in our culture to distort pleasure, according to Lewis, then, we shall have to resist the habit of turning pleasure into something less than it potentially is. We must resist the tendency to treat pleasures as ways by which the self and its capacities are confirmed. And we have to dissociate pleasure from our power to control and to manipulate our worlds.

One sees a representation of what pleasure becomes in modern culture in the figure of Weston when Ransom comes upon him on *Perelandra*. Weston has been cutting open frog-like creatures. The behavior is marked by repetition and control. It testifies to Weston's position as a scientist, one who can subject the world to the desire to know it. Weston takes it as an obviously attractive form of behavior. He expects Ransom to join in, and he throws a conspiratorial smile in Ransom's direction. But Ransom is not fooled into mistaking the kind of unity or commonality that Weston offers in this perverse pleasure for the unity or shared world that is offered to participants in occasions of genuine pleasure. Weston's version of pleasure and unity is given in the language of power, reduction, and repetition.

Another example of what finally happens when the positive potentials of pleasure are poisoned and exploited is, of course, the image of "Our Father Below" in *The Screwtape Letters*. He is the consummate narcissist, the one who wants to reduce the world entirely to himself, who, indeed, wants to devour it. Hell, the great perversion of pleasure, is absorption and subjection to a single desire and power. All who enter his domain and are finally absorbed by his insatiable appetite recognize that they not only have done what they should not have done but also have

done what they did not want to do. They have denied their own desires and have allowed them to be determined by and directed toward the great maw. The one who distorts pleasure into self-confirmation and self-enlargement is, for Lewis, him- or herself being drawn into a world that is an insatiable emptiness.

I said earlier that pleasure is received; it is a gift. Another way of saying this is that gifts are potentially the greatest source of pleasure. This does not seem true because of what gifts have become in our culture. Gifts are part of our economic life. I must tip in restaurants. If someone gives me a gift, I must reciprocate. Gifts are forms of payment and repayment. They are obligatory. We have lost a sense of what gift-giving is or can be. However, although gift-giving and receiving have become housed within the routines and schedules of our social structure we continue to be excited about the prospects of receiving a gift. And the reason that we are, I think, is this: we have had on occasion the experience of receiving a gift that we did not know we wanted or even needed until the gift was received. The gift awakened the need and the desire. Such a moment of reception and recognition is a high pleasure.

I think that Lewis wants us to conclude that the pleasure of receiving such a gift is the kind of pleasure of which Christianity speaks. It speaks of and offers gifts. Those gifts create or awaken in their reception, as no others can, an awareness that all of the desires and needs aroused before by gifts find their fulfillment in a particular gift, namely, the gift of grace. One recognizes for the first time what it was all along that was desired and what, finally, delights.

But I also think that Lewis wants us to conclude that we cannot move directly from a culture of self-preoccupation, a culture of life as battle, and a culture of power into the Christian language of grace. If we do that, Christianity then becomes just another way of being important or being different or of being self-preoccupied. What is required first of all is a willingness to

receive, to acknowledge the value of the world that lies outside the self--things, events, people. And in order to do that, a person has to acknowledge that he or she lives in deep and complex primary relations with the world, with things, events and other people. It is in and through these relations that a self is given. A person who lives in the world that way is a person who will be able to have genuine experiences of pleasure. And a person able to have genuine experiences of pleasure is a person prepared to recognize and to understand the Christian language of grace.