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The Last Serialist: C.S. Lewis and J.W. Dunne

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The Last Serialist: C.S. Lewis and J.W. Dunne

Abstract

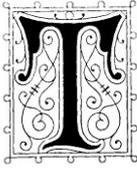
C.S. Lewis was influenced by Serialism, a theory of time, dreams and immortality proposed by J.W. Dunne. The closing chapters of the final Chronicle of Narnia, *The Last Battle*, are examined here. Relevant aspects of Dunne's theory are drawn out and his known influence on the works of Lewis revisited. The closing chapters of *The Last Battle* are now seen to embrace many features of Serialism's infinite regress to immortality.

Additional Keywords

The Last Battle; The Dark Tower; Serialism; Immortality; Narnia

Cover Page Footnote

The author is indebted to the Science Museum, UK, for access to its Dunne collection before it has been fully catalogued.



THE LAST SERIALIST: C.S. LEWIS AND J.W. DUNNE

CUG INCHBALD

THE LAST BATTLE

THE MOST FAMOUS WORK OF THE THEOLOGIAN AND WRITER C.S. Lewis is without doubt the seven chronicles of Narnia, in which ordinary children are transported to a fantastical world of adventure. Narnian time rather curiously runs independently from our own: a human child may live a lifetime in Narnia and grow to adulthood, yet return to the real England still a child and almost at the moment of leaving. The final volume in the series, *The Last Battle*, sees Narnian time come to an end. But it is not the end for the Narnians themselves. Lewis was an Anglican Christian so it is no surprise that his Narnians should be granted a suitably Heavenly afterlife. What is perhaps more surprising is the extent to which Lewis develops this theme throughout the last four chapters, along with the nature and origin of the afterlife which he portrays.

The main tale of Narnia's downfall need not concern us, save only to note how the child heroes, who feature in all the chronicles, arrived on this occasion. Some were traveling by train and others waiting on the platform when "there came a most frightful jerk and a noise" (Chapter 5) and there they were all in Narnia: we are not told what this means until later. The action focuses around a stable, in which the devilish god or antichrist Tash presently takes up residence, and in due course all the various protagonists end up in there.

Chapter 12 lays the foundations for what is to follow. As characters enter the stable for one reason or another, Tash takes the evil ones for his own while the name of Aslan, a well-known allegory for Christ, protects the good.

Not everybody is judged. Chapter 13 looks at the unbelieving Dwarfs, who see none of that but still find themselves inside the original stable. By contrast all the child heroes now appear as they had done in Narnia's past, as adult nobles in the prime of their lives, however young or old they had been back in England or when they first arrived in the present tale, and the inside of the stable has become a fair, open land. The door itself remains standing, ridiculous-looking in the landscape while as far as Narnia is concerned they are all still inside the stable. Aslan arrives in person and the chapter closes as he opens the door of the stable from the inside and calls out for Father Time himself to end Narnia.

As “Night Falls on Narnia” (Chapter 14) its inhabitants all head towards the door. The bad are siphoned off through Aslan’s dark shadow and vanish from the tale, out of sight and out of mind. The good stream in through the door. One of them, Roonwit the Centaur, calls out “Further in and higher up!” before galloping on. With Narnia now dead, Time extinguishes its sun and Aslan calls on King Peter to shut the door one last time. Narnia is no more. Aslan now repeats the cry, “Come further in! Come further up!” and leads them off into the West.¹

Chapter 15 takes up the cry explicitly, being itself titled “Further Up and Further In.” It dwells a while on redemption before everybody discovers that they are still in Narnia, but a higher and greater one, a Narnia which is “more like the real thing” yet “as different as a real thing is from a shadow or as waking life is from a dream.” Digory likens it to Plato’s Ideal realm. Jewel the Unicorn sums it up; “I have come home at last! This is my real country! [...] Come further up, come further in!” before galloping off. The others discover to their surprise that they can now run fast enough to keep up.

Chapter 16, “Farewell to the Shadowlands,” pursues the theme to its conclusion. The limitations of the flesh continue to fall away: running up a waterfall is effortless, if still leaving everyone soaking wet. They come to a hill crowned by a walled garden with golden gates. Entering, they meet all the characters from the earlier chronicles, long dead in the lower Narnia. Presently it dawns on them that this is yet a third Narnia, greater and more magnificent even than the second. It is “like an onion: except that as you go in and in, each circle is larger than the last.” Their perceptions are now so expanded that they can even see beyond the bounds of Narnia to other worlds, including England. This is of course not the physical England but the idealized third-level England. But to travel there, to meet their own fathers and mothers, the offspring will have to travel once again further up and further in, to a fourth level.

Before they do, the truth about their fate is revealed. The jolt and bang which had brought them back to Narnia earlier in the book are now explained. Their aging physical bodies had died when the train crashed into the station. Their conscious selves still lived on in the immortal levels of being; “The dream is ended: this is the morning.”

The final paragraph moves beyond the describable. Lewis highlights their immortality; “we can most truly say that they lived happily ever after,” “the Great Story which [...] goes on for ever.” And, as every Christian should write of the Heavenly afterlife, “in which every chapter is better than the one before.”

¹ Citations are given by chapter number, as many editions with different pagination exist. “Further” is the usage in US editions. The UK spelling, used by Lewis, is “farther.”

THE SERIALISM OF J.W. DUNNE

J.W. Dunne was a man plagued by dreams of the future, sometimes presaging dramatic disasters such as the Martinique volcanic eruption or the derailment of the Flying Scotsman. A soldier in the Boer War and later a pioneer aeronaut of some fame, during the First World War ill health forced him to take up less active pursuits. His natural inclination to rationalism and science was deeply disturbed by the prescient nature of his dreams. This inner turmoil drove him to concoct a philosophical theory, which he called Serialism, to try and make sense of it all. One of his early breakthroughs was the realization that his dreams did not foretell external events as such, but rather his own experience of hearing about them: for example his dream of the Martinique disaster included errors of detail drawn from his reading about it afterwards. And he knew that he was not creating false memories of past dreams, as he had told his sister about the derailment dream before the event actually took place (*An Experiment with Time* 60–61).

In essence, Dunne had to tackle the problem of Time. Einstein's theory of Relativity had brought to the fore the idea that time was a fourth dimension and one might lay out the universe in a four-dimensional map sometimes called the block universe. Any individual's life then formed a track or timeline across this landscape. Dunne had long puzzled over how we know where we are on that line and how we experience time passing as we move along it at a steady pace: when still only a boy of nine he had challenged his nurse about it. Later the distinguished astronomer and physicist, Sir Arthur Eddington, would agree with his statement of the problem (*Experiment* 241). He also wanted to understand how he could dream snatches of his own future from further along his timeline.

The theory Dunne evolved is both simple to grasp in principle and tediously long-winded to expound in detail, so I hope the short version will suffice here. Verlyn Flieger may be more familiar to some readers and provides a slightly fuller account of Serialism, especially of the Time aspect (*A Question of Time* 38–46).² Dunne's solution was to add a new dimension of time against which the conscious mind measures and experiences its passage through physical block time. To this he attached a level of consciousness above that driven by the moment-to-moment business of the day. When not bound by the

² Summarizing Dunne's exposition of Serialism in a few paragraphs can never capture all its nuances. His verbiage and logic were often elaborate and it becomes essential to substitute more familiar words. Flieger's treatment (38–46) was perfectly adequate for its own purpose but, for various reasons, will not quite do here. I have therefore introduced the image of "levels" of Time and consciousness which, though equally unfaithful to Dunne's terminology, resonates not only with the ascending count in his serial regressions but also with his and Lewis's instinctive Christian perspective.

brain's busy focus on events in block time, such as when dreaming, the conscious self could roam more freely through its own time dimension, sometimes glimpsing its own future. This seemed to neatly explain his prescient dreams.

But then he ran into a problem. The same logic that had created his new levels of time and consciousness did not stop there. It found the same problem in the new setup; we now need to measure out and experience our movement through that higher time in which we measure out our physical timeline. This, he argued, demanded a third level of time and another of consciousness, and so on in the infinite serial regress which gave his theory its name.

Dunne's theory went beyond the nature of time and delved also into the nature of consciousness. One unforeseen consequence which he deduced from his regress was the existence of an infinite mind, an "ultimate thinker." Another consequence was our own immortality. Since our physical bodies only existed in physical block time, there was no mechanism by which our higher selves would be made to die with it, a person simply withdrew to the higher levels of consciousness where, in the higher levels of time, they would perform be immortal and would at their leisure work their way ever upwards.

During the lifetime of the physical body, its constant mental activity drags the attention of the first-level consciousness continually back to the present. This prevents awareness from extending both along its own higher timeline and upwards to higher levels. Sleep and other altered states of consciousness allow one to catch only glimpses of these other regions. Only when the body dies and its relentless tugging had ceased is one's consciousness able to begin the real journey outward and upward:

We must live before we can attain to either intelligence or control at all. We must sleep if we are not to find ourselves, at death, helplessly strange to the new conditions. And we must die before we can hope to advance to a broader understanding. (*Experiment 218*)

Dunne published little on what happens in that afterlife, with some of what follows coming from his private correspondence and other notes (Dunne, personal papers). At the most immediate level, he suggested that the minds of the newly-dead would still be very much conditioned by their physical past and many would at first not even recognize their new condition, never mind its implications. Those who realized that they had died might at first see their own bodies in idealized form, as they would wish to be. They would also begin to meet other, familiar minds at the same level and, as understanding developed, would begin to explore together a connected web of experiences, both past and, with practice, future. The true nature of reality would steadily become revealed

to them. Everybody would progress according to their bent. Presently they would learn to discard old limitations of thought and embrace the third level, where the interconnections and degree of enlightenment would be greater still, and so on *ad infinitum* in an upward journey towards the Ultimate Mind.

But this is no certain path to Heaven. Many individuals would struggle to make any sense of what so defied their old beliefs and senses: they might spend an age trapped at this level, incapable of understanding their predicament. Yet others would recognize something of their situation but bad memories and evil habits would still dominate their thought, leading them down paths which Dunne chose not to contemplate further. Of course, there is no evidence suggesting that Lewis would have been aware of these unpublished ideas of Dunne.

Dunne was also an Anglican Christian.³ To his surprise and delight, he realized that at the far end of his infinite regress his “superlative general observer, the fount of [...] consciousness” perfectly fitted his ideas of Christian Divinity (*Experiment* 235, 237, *Intrusions?*).

An Experiment with Time was first published in 1927. It became an instant hit, undergoing repeated revisions and new editions during his lifetime and it has seldom been out of print to this day. Sequels followed. For a decade and more Serialism was a popular topic of discussion not only among dream researchers and philosophers but also physicists and Society at large. Few commentators ever accepted his infinite regress, but the second time dimension to explain our experience of time passing and of prescient dreams proved a good deal more attractive. Highbrow discussions spilled beyond the pages of *Nature* to the works of philosophers such as Gunn and Cleugh (Gunn, *The Problem of Time*; Cleugh, *Time*). Articles both by him and about him appeared in popular newspapers, he lectured on BBC radio, television, and elsewhere (Dunne, *Nothing Dies* 75). As Flieger puts it, “while it lasted, Dunne’s theory was so current and popular a topic that *not* to understand it was a mark of singularity” (46).

LEWIS AND DUNNE

The literary world was no exception to the Dunne craze. References are legion. Among the more significant, H.G. Wells, J.B. Priestley, John Buchan, James Hilton, and Graham Greene have been noted by Victoria Stewart (“J.W. Dunne and Literary Culture”). Besides Tolkien and Lewis, Flieger has added

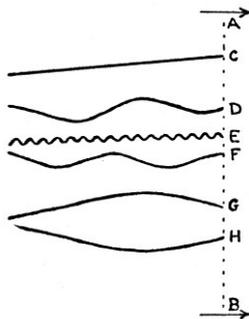
³ Although Dunne once described himself as “Catholic” (*Intrusions?* 118), this was in the strict theological sense of the Anglican Church as one of several Catholic churches, the Roman being another such. His marriage was Anglican, which would not have been permitted to a Roman Catholic (personal papers).

T.S. Eliot, E.R. Eddison, Mervyn Peake, and Olaf Stapledon (46, 136). The atheistic literary *avant garde* such as Wyndham Lewis and Jorge Luis Borges even found enough of note to be worthy of their disdain (Lewis, W., "You Broke My Dream"; Borges, "Time and J.W. Dunne").

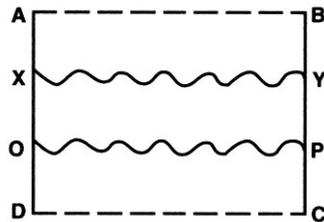
It was in this somewhat fevered climate that C.S. Lewis and his fellow Inklings were similarly drawn into the prevailing interest in Dunne's ideas. Both Lewis and Tolkien owned Third Editions of *An Experiment with Time* and Lewis's copy is preserved in the Wade Collection at Wheaton College Library, Illinois, US (Flieger 47). The nature of space and time featured among their discussions from time to time, and Dunne's Serialism was given a good airing. It came to influence the ideas and fictional writings of them both.

For Lewis's part, the first concrete example seems to have appeared in *The Allegory of Love* (1936), where he drew a parallel between layer upon layer of stage backcloths and the many levels or planes of serial time, making this one of very few literary allusions to the infinite regress of Serialism in anything but a dismissive light (Lindskoog, "Lewis and J.W. Dunne").

More significantly, he incorporated some aspects of Dunne's theories into his unfinished novel *The Dark Tower*, probably written around 1939 (Hooper, "A Note on The Dark Tower" 82). The characters briefly discuss Dunne at one point, with Orfeu putting forward the dream experiences as incontrovertible and even claiming to have identified "the organ of memory and prevision" (12) within the brain. A second dimension of time appears too but one must be careful not to read too much of Dunne into it for, unlike Dunne's, this "Othertime" is on the same level of physical reality as our own time and it carries a different or variant world with it. Later in the book we learn that time is two-dimensional and each world travels an uneven course through it. Lewis adopts something of Dunne's presentational style at this point, producing a diagram and mathematical exposition full of A's and B's, and looking as if they could have come straight from the pages of that Third Edition:



One of Dunne's diagrams



Lewis's Othertime diagram

The Dark Tower also allows a level of mental time which it describes as “the mind’s movement along our own unilinear time” (105), a foundational aspect of Serialism, which until now seems to have been overlooked by commentators on Lewis. But Dunne’s scheme of endless higher levels of time and consciousness makes no real foray into the tale beyond this first level of the mind, while the parallel physical timelines appear unrelated to Dunne. Where the two physical timelines momentarily touch, it is possible to cross from one world into the other, from one physical timeline to another, without breaking the continuity of experienced time. But there are complexities here. The character Scudamore physically jumps across into Othertime and, in a dreamlike sequence, meets his physically deformed opposite number, the Stinging Man, face to face. On another occasion his conscious mind ends up actually in the body of that opposite number, whose equally deformed mind in turn occupies Scudamore’s own body in our timeline. There is a suggestion that one body may simply be the other at a later point on its own, wandering timeline. It seems that worlds, bodies, and minds may all follow potentially different timelines. Dreams appear to be involved, but how? The puzzles are never resolved, for unfortunately the novel breaks off unfinished part way through the time discussion. It is hard not to get the impression that a failure to resolve these puzzles may have been the very reason why Lewis broke off writing at that point. At any rate, in its place came *That Hideous Strength* (1945), in which Lewis abandoned any attempt at complicated timelines and resorted to a single lighthearted but dismissive comment, “not living in Mr. Dunne’s sort of time,” by Mark Studdock (170). It was made in the context of writing about events which had not yet occurred, but Lewis did not feel a need to explain the reference to Dunne in any way, apparently assuming that his readers would be familiar enough with it. If nothing else, this speaks volumes for Dunne’s widespread notoriety lasting well on into the 1940s.

Layered Heavens are a common enough religious theme, though less so in Christian imagery. Often they are more concerned with differing aspects of doctrine or classes of being than with the progression of the individual. For example the nine spheres of Heaven in Dante’s *Paradise*, the concluding volume of his *Divine Comedy*, are each very different in purpose and deeply allegorical. The many levels of Purgatory and of Hell described in the companion volumes share similar narrow allegorical purposes. In *The Great Divorce*, written some four years before the first Narnia story and ten years before *The Last Battle*, Lewis creates a single Heaven and a single Hell, but each individual is present to a degree reflecting their spiritual progress. Hell and Purgatory are the same place lived through different eyes. While one soul may appear as little more than a translucent and transitory ghost in Heaven, another may be a radiant and substantial permanent resident. Thus, he depicts a coexistence of multiple levels

of experience within a mere two levels of existence, Heaven and Hell (Lewis, *The Great Divorce*).

Like Dunne, Lewis believed in precognitive dreams. According to Hooper, he remembered many of his own dreams and had frequent experiences of *déjà vu*, believing that such an experience was the meeting in the real world with what one had once dreamed (Hooper 84). Lewis also once recounted the experience of a friend of his, who dreamed of a road accident and warned the prospective travelers about it. When the moment came the driver, forewarned, was able to take evasive action and prevent the disaster (Morris, "Encounter in a Two-Bit Pub" 112–113). Thus, he was well disposed to accept Dunne's account of his dreams and he mentioned them on occasion in his own writings.

In *Reflections on the Psalms* (1958) he suggested that the prophet Isaiah literally foresaw the sufferings of Christ in much the same way that Dunne's dreams foresaw the future (Lindskoog, "Lewis"). In *The Discarded Image* (1964) he suggests that "Mr Dunne's *Experiment with Time* is mainly about *visions*," by which he means direct, literal pre-visions of the future (64).⁴ This interpretation is not entirely borne out by Dunne's posthumous and autobiographical book *Intrusions?*, in which he reveals that those precognitive dreams were sometimes accompanied by commanding voices and angelic visions. Both Lewis and Tolkien picked up on the potential of such "real dream" visions—of both past and future—as a literary device, and even traded in-jokes with each other in their draft manuscripts.

Lewis accepted not only Dunne's precognitive dreaming but also his second-level time dimension in which we experience movement along our timeline in the physical block universe. But that was enough for him. Indeed, these ideas were not exclusive to Dunne, in whom Lewis may have found only a sympathetic voice rather than an oracle: to suggest that Lewis inherited such ideas directly from Dunne is not really sustainable. What Dunne did do was bring a certain dry, rationalist style of analysis and exposition to these topics. And like most people, Lewis rejected the infinite regress of time dimensions as quite unnecessary (Morris 112). All this was reflected in *The Dark Tower*, and the tale is perhaps less directly influenced by Dunne's theorizing than has sometimes been suggested.

Lewis had found his way to God through his own independent experiences and reasoning, and had no need of such a problematic notion as Serialism. He was therefore not a full-blown disciple of Dunne's, though as we have seen he did share many of his tenets, and he was of course not above using unreal imagery for purely literary purposes. From this we may take the regress

⁴ Lindskoog ("Lewis") copies the entry verbatim, except for writing "visions" instead of "visiones." This may or may not have any significance.

mentioned in *The Allegory of Love* to be just that, an allegory or metaphor which Lewis might indulge in to effect, but nothing more.

Another affinity between Lewis and Dunne lay in the fact that both men were deeply committed Anglican Christians who had, at some point during their teens, angrily renounced God before later experiencing reconversion. Both were deep, rationalist thinkers who sought answers to the same eternal questions and, at the end of the trail, felt that they had satisfactorily proved the existence of God and of heavenly immortality. However, while Lewis's demonstration leaned more towards a rationalizing of theological arguments, Dunne's arose as a side effect of his equally rationalist Serialism. Whether Lewis was aware of Dunne's faith or not, there are perforce similarities of argument and idea between any rationalizations of Pauline Christianity. Consciously or unconsciously, these would have resonated between them.

As the two Inklings worked their way through their later tales they continued discussing their ideas. The curious, disjoint relationship between the flows of time in our own world and those of Lewis is in some ways similar to Tolkien's handling of Elvish time in Middle-earth. There, Lórien time is dreamlike, perhaps on a more advanced level than ordinary time. Tolkien too drew diagrams reminiscent of Dunne to help map it out (Fliieger 104–107). The last journey into the West, as depicted by Lewis in *The Last Battle*, might seem to grow a Dunnian dimension as the travelers set off towards an idealized future in a higher realm of time and being. But we have to remember that many old legends and tales, not least from the Land of Faërie, play similar games with Time. The idea of a mind finding itself in a dreamlike or immortal world and out of ordinary time is an ancient one. For example there is no deep parallel here with Tolkien's departure of Bilbo and Frodo into the West and a higher immortality at the end of the *The Lord of the Rings*. Although they borrowed his reasoning where it made sense to them, Lewis and Tolkien differed from Dunne on many points and there is little else in either *The Dark Tower* or Tolkien's works to link their inspiration more deeply to Serialism.

Nevertheless all these strands of common interest, experience, and literary borrowings reveal how Lewis had a strong and continuing interest in Dunne's ideas. It should not surprise us too much if the theme were to surface once more in Lewis's later and most famous tales.

SERIALISM IN NARNIA

Lewis did not wholly discard his two-dimensional physical time along with *The Dark Tower*. Narnian time, which runs through the main chronicles, is so close an equivalent to Othertime that it is in effect the same idea re-used, with magical objects such as the wardrobe replacing Orfeu's chronoscope apparatus. When Lewis came to write *The Magician's Nephew*, his retrospective "first"

chronicle of Narnia, he extended the idea of multiple timelines carrying different worlds. There is certainly no dreamlike higher quality to the shattered world of Charn, its queen Jadis, or her very physical invasion of London. Charn displays a parallel physicality with our world. But when he created an in-between place, a kind of temporal railway junction connecting the physical worlds, Lewis gave it a sleepy, dreamlike quality (Lewis, *The Magician's Nephew*). There are some similarities between the children's mental state in this in-between place and Sam's in Lórien. However, while the idea of multiple Othertimes might now be pressing outwards, it was not yet looking upwards.

Lindskoog identifies the theme of "further up and further in" running throughout the closing chapters of *The Last Battle* but makes no mention of Dunne (*Journey into Narnia* 183). Her summary of Dunne's cameo appearances in the writings of Lewis, published the next year, in turn fails to include Narnia ("Lewis"). Lindskoog notes another critic recognizing a "doubling of Heavenly archetypes" from the higher Narnia in the stable to another beyond even that, but neither commentator can offer any further explanation (*Journey* 218).

Jared Lobdell at least opens the debate, though from a different perspective:

[W]as the Lucy who was a grown-up Queen in Narnia [...] the same Lucy who died in the train wreck in England in *The Last Battle*? In what sense the same? [...] [In] *The Dark Tower* [...] the problem of Othertime is more like the problem of Narnian time [...]. [T]he time in Lewis's Othertime is two-dimensional [...]. (Lobdell 68)

Lobdell asks the question about the two Lucys almost in passing and addresses it only obliquely through his main analysis of Othertime in *The Dark Tower*. Although he is able to draw out parallels between Narnian time and Othertime, the question of personal identity was left hanging when Lewis put down his pen on Scudamore and the Stinging Man.

I suggest here that far greater significance with respect to Dunne's ideas may be found in the closing chapters in the final chronicle of Narnia, *The Last Battle*. The context for their appreciation is now clear enough to return to them.

In the stable scene which opens the sequence, the Dwarfs are present at a different spiritual level from the others sharing the scene, in a condition which resembles that of purgatory and is presaged by *The Great Divorce*. In contrast to the more traditional imagery such as Dante's there is no separate place for Purgatory. Yet its purgatory-like condition is set alongside a first Heaven, whereas in *The Great Divorce* Lewis had overlaid Purgatory with Hell. Multiple Heavens, "further up and further in," soon make their appearance. These layered Heavens are built not on specific aspects of doctrine but, as in *The*

Great Divorce, on a general upward progression of the spirit. And as we have seen, where *The Great Divorce* overlays multiple spiritual Heavens on one physical landscape, in *The Last Battle* one must actively travel from each level to the next.

At the second level of being, in the world inside the stable, the differences of perception between the Dwarfs and the others echo the differences in understanding of the recent dead in Dunne's scheme. The merging of purgatory with the first Heaven, where the experience of the individual varies according to their spiritual level, is present in both schemes. The convenient sidelining of the damned from the picture can hardly be described as a common imagery, though it is curious enough as a common choice in the telling (does one sense a common squeamishness?). The sequence of higher and higher Narnias bears an obvious parallel to Dunne's sequence of higher and higher time dimensions and levels of consciousness. The serial call to "Come further in, come further up!" needs no further comment.

An unspoken implication of the tale is that the human children had only been able to begin the journey onward once the pull of their physical bodies had ceased, another feature of Serialism. For the humans it is made explicit that they have died, and it is equally obvious that the historic Narnians must have also (save for Reepicheep). Their bodies cannot be their old physical ones. Also, as with Dunne, the limitations of the physical body have not followed the individual, and so each person appears in idealized form as they would wish to be. Time here continues, despite the ending of Narnian time—and as with Dunne it is clearly a different level of time.

Lewis would have been well aware of the more obvious inferences from Serialism, but it is less clear how much he knew of Dunne's more obscure embellishments on the progress of the soul after death. The parallels are so many and so clear that the possibility must arise of some exchange of ideas taking place. Dunne's extensive papers show no hint that he ever met Lewis, though they lived not many miles apart; Lewis in Oxford itself and Dunne at Broughton Castle, near Banbury. They would surely have had mutual acquaintances, who may have provided a conduit. To what extent the fine detail of Lewis's tale was informed by his fellow Christian's picture of Serial immortality, or was filled in through a parallel but independent process of reasoning, is unclear. Nevertheless *The Last Battle* is not only strongly reminiscent of Dunne's Serialism but is sufficiently so to mirror much of its fine detail.

But the two visions are not identical. Differences also become apparent under further close comparison. Perhaps the most striking innovation is the way in which Lewis has brought together his multiple physical othertimes with Dunne's multiple levels of being. The higher one goes, the more these other worlds connect and merge into a single greater reality, just as individual people

do in Serialism's afterlife. This device is not so much a difference between ideas as a fusion; there is nothing in either scheme which inherently either presages or forbids the other.

The apparent existence of a full three-dimensional space at each level is perhaps uncertain. For if people's bodies are not so much physical as ideal, as Digory points out, what then of the space which they now inhabit? In a physical sense the space is as insubstantial as the bodies, a kind of group hallucination brought on by everybody's memories. Lewis follows Dunne in going the other way, painting a sharper picture, of a world more real, lasting, and meaningful than before.

The siphoning off of the condemned into Aslan's shadow, presumably into the clutches of the devilish Tash, strikes a powerful echo of the Day of Judgment. It also echoes Dunne's reluctance to consider the fate of the evil-minded. Yet Dunne had no such cut-and-dried notion as the damned: his higher levels accessed all realities of the old world with equal emphasis, good and bad. In his afterlife, each person must carve their own path through Eternity. Lewis's Dwarfs strike a closer parallel with those of Dunne's dead who are unable to comprehend what has happened to them.

As Lewis's characters move upward to the third level and beyond, their consciousness is visibly expanding. They can run faster, see further, access bridges between worlds. While Dunne is less prescriptive about what happens at each level, he does write that "we must die before we can hope to advance to a broader understanding" (*Experiment* 218). Lewis thus provides a close visualization of his serial regress of consciousness, with each higher level expanding its scope to widen its experience and make contact with other minds, initially based around its own past memories, though that limitation must eventually fall away. While the conclusion seems inescapable that Lewis is deliberately depicting aspects of Dunne's theory, one thing missing is the ability to see both the future and the past. Given Lewis's expressed belief in premonitions, it might be argued that this arises more in the interest of keeping a children's book accessible than in any particular difference of view.

There is no suggestion in *The Last Battle* that the flows of time in each of these higher levels might be distinct. We know that Lewis rejected this aspect of Serialism, accepting only the two levels of time that he does explicitly depict. On the other hand he had once been content to use Dunne's endless "planes of time" in an allegorical context. In *The Last Battle*, Lewis simply ignores the issue and we are left wondering at how the bonds of Time might loosen in the higher levels of being as they approach the infinite. One can at least say that the Narnian treatment is compatible with Dunne's.

Lewis was prone to playing intellectual games with his readers. When Aslan remarks that "The dream is ended: this is the morning" (*Last Battle*,

Chapter 16), this can be seen as a sly reference to Dunne's theory of dreams transcending ordinary time. As Dunne had written, many people who died might not at first realize what had happened and would take a while to come to terms with it.

The final paragraph moves beyond the describable. Lewis highlights their immortality; "we can most truly say that they lived happily ever after," "the Great Story which [...] goes on for ever," and ends "in which every chapter is better than the one before" (Chapter 16). Even here, Lewis seems to be playing a game with the reader, one he began several chapters earlier. Chapter 12 reaches perhaps the lowest point in the tale, with the last battle lost and the surviving protagonists forced to confront Tash. From that moment on the remainder of the book follows their progress further up and further in, to higher and happier realms of being, each chapter indeed being "better than the one before." Lewis appears to be constructing the end of his book quite literally around his closing remark.

In all this we have seen that, although Lewis is building his final chapters around Dunne's Serialism, he is not slavishly following every detail for the sake of it. A certain amount finds no room in the tale, whether through differences of belief, of imagery, or for the tale-spinner's convenience.

Setting aside such minor differences, the extent of detail with which Lewis followed Dunne's Serialist philosophy in *The Last Battle* is remarkable and unparalleled in any other known literary work. His crowning final act of the Narnia chronicles is, both broadly and in fair detail, Dunne's metaphysics of time, consciousness and immortality.

The Last Battle was published in 1956, just seven years after Dunne's death and one year after his last, posthumous book on Serialism. It is probably safe to say that it stands not only as the last and most powerful theological imagery of the Narnian chronicles, but also as the last and most powerful depiction of Serialism's immortality that literature has yet seen.

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