Spring 3-15-1991

Lewis and Barfield on Imagination: Part II

Stephen Thorson

Follow this and additional works at: https://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore

Part of the Children's and Young Adult Literature Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore/vol17/iss3/3

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Mythopoeic Society at SWOSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Mythlore: A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature by an authorized editor of SWOSU Digital Commons. An ADA compliant document is available upon request. For more information, please contact phillip.fitzsimmons@swosu.edu.

To join the Mythopoeic Society go to: http://www.mythsoc.org/join.htm
Lewis and Barfield on Imagination: Part II

Abstract
Contrasts Lewis’s and Barfield’s views on imagination, and its relationship to truth and knowledge.

Additional Keywords
Anthroposophy and imagination; Barfield, Owen—Epistemology—Imagination; Imagination—Relation to knowledge; Imagination—Relation to truth; Imagination, Theory of; Lewis, C.S.—Epistemology—Imagination
The “Great War” Letters: Imagination and Truth

All of the “Great War” letters have not survived. Most of those that have survived were written by Lewis and preserved by Barfield.15

In what must be one of the first surviving letters Lewis began in his typical manner by distinguishing two uses for the term “truth.” On the one hand, he said, it can be an object or fact; on the other, it can be the “mental complex” related to that fact. “I say a complex because when we know, we always know that, etc. (an accusative with the infinitive)...” Notice that from the very beginning Lewis has limited truth to propositional statements that we can “know.” To be even more specific, he usually spoke of truth in terms of a true-false statement (whether a certain statement is true or false). We cannot say that emotions or bodies are true or false, because the concept does not apply to the things themselves. We can only say whether a certain statement about them is true or false.

The question at hand was whether or not the truth-falsehood concept could be applied to Imagination. Of course, Lewis said, it does not apply to “ordinary imagination,” the mere “image-making faculty.” Ordinary images merely invented by conscious effort cannot be True in any sense of the term. But what about poetic imagination (i.e. Imagination as experienced by both Lewis and Barfield, and as described in the Summa)? Lewis pointed out that both he and Barfield had experienced the images appearing after poetic imagination “ebbs.” And those images cannot be different from ordinary images; like them, they are not in that class of things about which we can use the word Truth. Lewis did suggest, however, that Truth might pertain to some imageless state of Imagination “wherein the light of sense goes out.”

Furthermore, and more importantly for Lewis’ view of knowledge, any “sediment” of explicit assertion left with the sediment of images could not be true-or-false either. Even if the assertion is true, it could not be the same truth as seen in poetic imagination; otherwise, how does poetic imagination differ from normal judgement? He likened “the crossing of the frontier” between the inspired and uninspired states to the blurring that takes place “when you change the focus of your telescope.” Summing up his argument so far, Lewis said, “Granting the truth of poetical imagination, we can never argue from it to the truth of any judgement which springs up in the mind as it returns to normal consciousness.”

Therefore, Lewis asserted, 1) even if we are sure that we know in poetic imagination, we can’t be sure of what we know, and 2) poetic imagination is not in the class of things to which True-False can be applied. Lewis hastened to add, however, that he did not deny value to poetic imagination merely because it does not have the kind of Truth he had been talking about. Morality and Beauty do not have Truth in that sense, either. He quoted Sidney to the effect that poets do not lie, because they never assert.

Barfield’s answer has fortunately been preserved. Indeed, it is in this letter that he most clearly showed the difference between his thought and Lewis’. First of all, Barfield refused to accept Lewis’ limited definition of the term “Truth.” “Truth to you... is something you look at... while reality is something you are but never see,” he said. Barfield did not define Truth as an “accurate copy or reflection” of reality, but as reality itself “taking the form of human consciousness.” Secondly, he used an argument we might call metaphysical since it was based on his view of the soul’s evolution from Spirit. In it he drew a diagram to explain how “Inspiration, or ‘supersensible’ experience, ‘light of sense going out,’ etc., is a sort of withdrawal from A into that-which-is-in-process-of-becoming A, wherein I find that I am also in (i.e. become one with) that-which-is-in-process-of-becoming B.” There is a similar argument in Barfield’s Replicit to Lewis’ Summa in which he attacked Lewis’ use of the enjoyment/contemplation distinction. There he pointed out that Imagination could be called “con-enjoyment,” since it involves moving back toward Spirit from pure soulhood. In both the letter and the later Replicit the inference is plain. Inspiration or “con-enjoyment” must mean seeing Truth from Spirit’s perspective.

Third, Barfield considered the logical process itself to be inadequate to deal with reality. Since terms change their meaning when passing through time or between people, a term is an “arbitrary cross-section of the process taking place in time.” Terms must be “artificially taken out of time” to be used, while reality continues to change, he said. Therefore, since most sentences are both true and untrue, logical statements cannot truly be a vehicle of anything worthy of the name of knowledge or truth. In other words, Barfield thought a limiting of Truth to the logical sphere alone (as Lewis did) was not only inadequate, but questioned whether the terms knowledge or truth could be applied to the logical sphere at all. Restating the argument
from his thesis, Barfield noted that terms "perpetually tend to lose their meaning and become tautologous," but could recover their meaning "at the fount of inspiration, flowing through imagination." In fact, as we saw earlier, Barfield claimed that inspiration and imagination are required intermediate steps between reality and terms, or between reality and metaphor.

Barfield agreed with Lewis that one can't argue from the truth of poetical imagination to the truth of any judgment that remains in the mind when it has returned to normal consciousness. However, Barfield believed that Anthroposophical training could overcome this problem, allowing the poet to retain fully the judgment he had in normal consciousness throughout an experience of poetic imagination. He again pointed Lewis toward Steiner's "systematic imagination" which could train the mind to observe its own activity. The underlying spiritual reality is not truth actual, Barfield said, but only truth potential, needing the Imagination to act upon it first.

Barfield had insisted in his thesis that the poet creates or re-creates primary meaning through the use of metaphor. "The progress is from Meaning [notice the capital] through inspiration to imagination, and from imagination through metaphor, to meaning" (PD, 141). Lewis seized Barfield's emphasis on meaning, and developed a distinction that he was never later to deny.

First, Lewis asked the question whether "knowledge" is a what or a that. He wished to distinguish between two different kinds of knowledge, the knowledge what something is like and the knowledge that something exists in fact. Since Barfield had also denied the truth of bald statements made after poetic imagination was over, Lewis thought they both agreed that metaphor may develop a what (in the hearer), but not demonstrate a that. Two people can share what something may be like by imagination, but disagree as to whether that "whatness" represents actual reality. With that, Lewis dropped the term "knowledge" almost completely. He preferred to distinguish between "meaning" (what something is like) and "truth" (whether something exists).16

To imagine what a statement would mean no more vouches for its validity than rival hypotheses in the mind of the scientist. Nothing can be either true or false unless it first means something; but to know what something means does not help one to know whether it is true or false. Metaphor can be used in prose arguments, as well. But even a good metaphor can only show the meaning in a point of view; it cannot show it to be well-founded. Therefore, poetic imagination can give meaning to a proposition (what it would mean, if true), but does not tell if it is true.

Lewis and Barfield continued to differ over the essential nature of truth and metaphor. Lewis denied the use of the term "truth" for the kind of knowledge that Barfield insisted Imagination (and metaphor) revealed. But he did accept the term "meaning" for that kind of knowledge.

Barfield, however, wished to maintain that Imagination produces Truth, and ultimately could lead to both meaning and true statements; that Anthroposophical training could lead to true propositional statements about the reality seen in moments of poetic imagination or inspiration.

We have seen how Lewis' high view of Imagination as Spiritual Awareness in Part II of the Summa was firmly based on his view of Being in Part I. We began our examination of the "Great War" letters because they clarified the serious clash which appears at the end of the Summa between Lewis' concept of Imagination and his concept of epistemology. We now see how the broad movement of Lewis' thought as the "Great War" progressed. The debate began over Barfield's epistemology ("how we know"), which had been based on Steiner's Anthroposophy. Lewis continued to argue against this view, strengthened by Alexander's enjoyment/contemplation distinction, while at the same time coming to accept both Barfield's view of metaphysics (man's Being as a soul emerging from Spirit of which it is a part) and Barfield's high Coleridgean view of Imagination!

Let us look at the main arguments of the Summa. In brief summary, Lewis proposed:

1. The soul emerges from Spirit, of which it is a part. The world of Nature also emerges from Spirit, and therefore "is the creation of what I, at some level, am."

2. We cannot both enjoy and contemplate at the same time, for the Spirit is the contemplating self and the soul is the enjoying self.

3. But we can, by Imagination, "see all things as Spirit sees," and "will all things as Spirit wills," and this is our ideal function as souls. Imagination, like all modes of the spiritual life, is a Spiritual Awareness or consciousness of one's participation in Spirit and (therefore) in all that seems external to us.

4. However, since we cannot both enjoy Imaginative experience and contemplate whether it is true at the same time, knowledge of truth or falsehood must be objectively demonstrated. The most we can say is that Imagination conveys the "meaning" or concrete "whatness" of something, but it cannot tell us "that" such is factually true or exists.

5. Therefore, although we can get meaning, we cannot get truth by Imagination alone.

Barfield accurately observed that points #1 (Lewis' view of Being) and #3 (his view of Imagination) contradicted point #2, suggesting that the enjoyment/contemplation distinction presented there was wrong. Eventually, however, Lewis denied points #1 and #3 instead! In my earlier paper (see Note 6 in Part I of this article), Lewis' denial of the view of Being presented in Part I of his Summa was emphasized. In the rest of this article, we will examine Lewis' eventual denial of the high view of Imagination he had presented in Part II.
Imagination was to have in his post-conversion thought.

According to Barfield and Coleridge, then, Lewis believed that artists imitate reality; they do not create it. Indeed, in his early essay, "Christianity and Literature," Lewis insisted that only such words as "imitation" or "reflection" correctly describe the artist’s work. "An author should never conceive himself as bringing into existence beauty or wisdom which did not exist before, but simply and solely as trying to embody in terms of his own art some reflection of eternal Beauty and Wisdom" (CP, 5-7).

This year in 1940 Lewis published a related essay, titled "Christianity and Culture." Of crucial importance for his new view of imagination, this essay marked the first appearance in print of Lewis’ contention that the soul and spirit are not the same. Lewis actually wrote "Christianity and Culture" in response to an article by George Every in the March 1939 issue of Theology. Brother Every had appeared to suggest that "culture" and "good taste" in literature were spiritual values. Lewis claimed to be appalled. "My fear was lest excellence in reading and writing were being elevated into a spiritual value" (CR, 28). He responded to Every by making his crucial distinction between the soul and the spirit of man. "We should be cured at the outset of our invertebrate confusion between psyche and pneuma, nature and supernatural" (CR, 13).

Using this distinction between soul and spirit, he denied that cultural things were spiritual. "Culture is a storehouse of the best (sub-Christian) values. These values are in themselves of the soul, not the spirit. But God created the soul. Its values may be expected, therefore, to contain some reflection or antepast of the spiritual values" (CR, 23).

This, then, was his clearest statement of the new place imagination was to have in his post-conversion thought. Imagination no longer remained the highest form of the spiritual life, no longer could be called Spiritual Awareness. Rather, imagination (small "i") had become a lower faculty, able to reflect spiritual values, but not "spiritual" itself. Lewis consistently maintained this in all his subsequent writings. For example, late in his life he explained his view thus, "I think that all things, in their way, reflect heavenly truths, the imagination not least. ‘Reflect’ is the important word. This lower life of the imagination is not a beginning, nor a step toward the higher life of the spirit, merely an image" (SH, 167).

This was based, of course, on his acceptance of a true creation of man as other than God, and his distinction between the soul and spirit of man. Prior to his conversion he had talked of the individual man's soul emerging from the universal Spirit. But after his conversion Lewis firmly believed man to consist of three parts — body, soul and spirit, all three being creations of God. (See Note 10.)

And Lewis placed the imagination of man in the realm of the soul, not the spirit. In fact, Lewis believed that the soul had its own subjective or psychological "world", the immaterial world of emotions, passions, memory, and imagination. In his Allegory of Love he studied the descriptions of this "world" that are found in medieval allegory, first in straight allegorical personifications, but later in a new and subtler way. He pointed to the rise from within the allegorical love poems of "something else" which "lurks at the back of most romantic poetry. I mean the ‘other world’ not of religion, but of imagination" (AoL, 75). "We are apt," he said, "to take for granted that a poet has at his command, besides the actual world and the world of his own religion, a third world of myth and fancy (AoL, 82). It is clear, then, that even shortly after his conversion. (The Allegory of Love was published in 1936) Lewis was beginning to distinguish the world of the imagination from the spiritual realm.

This distinction can actually be seen developing in Lewis’ mind during his long controversy with E.M.W. Tillyard over "The Personal Heres". Although the essays were eventually collected in book form in 1939, Lewis’ first essay was written during the later stages of the "Great War" and presented to the Martlets in March 1930. The fact of relevance to this discussion is that Lewis’ description of poetry in this first essay differs considerably from the one in his last (fifth) essay, written many years later. Lewis pointed this out himself in a note appended to the book form of the essays:

In the First we are told that the poet puts together 'scraps of ordinary seeing' in such a way as to produce a new mode of consciousness. This new mode sees objects more 'synthetically', and with a 'vaster context' than we usually attain. It is described as being 'racial'; and a subject who enjoyed it habitually would be superhuman. In the Fifth Essay poetry consists in a special use of language which exploits its extra-logical properties so as to convey the concrete. (PH, 146)
Lewis tried to unify the two seemingly unrelated concepts by observing that the first deals with “the poetic process (‘seeing’ and ‘saying’)” while the second deals with “the poetic object or content (the thing ‘seen’ and ‘said’).”

But he realized he could not remove a major inconsistency regarding the essential nature of poetic imagination. In the first essay the poetic consciousness had been identified with either “racial” or “angelic” consciousness, while in the last essay it was considered to be on a “much lower plane” — seemingly limited to merely conveying the concrete reality of experiences that are common to all men.

To speak more plainly, I have assumed (i) what now seems to me very unlikely, that large groups of human individuals possess a common consciousness; and (ii) that if they do, this common consciousness would be so superior to that of the individuals that it might be called ‘angelic’. In fact, I have exaggerated. (PH, 147, italics added)

He went on to admit that he only had “a right” to say that poets use “memories, associations, and values” that are widely distributed among all men, rejecting what is “merely idiosyncratic.” No human being, of course, constantly “enjoys” poetic imagination.

With our knowledge of the “Great War,” we can see that the first essay represented more of the pre-Christian views of the Summa and the last essay more of Lewis’ mature Christian thought. The “common consciousness” of man can only refer to his former view that all souls are essentially one in Spirit. In addition, the quotation provides further evidence that Lewis had accepted for a time Barfield’s contention that poetic imagination involves the soul’s “ascent” back toward Spirit, i.e. the poet experiencing poetic imagination essentially occupies a position in between universal Spirit and individual soul. By the time these essays were published in book form, however, Lewis realized that he no longer held those beliefs.

Lewis’ contributions to The Personal Heresy are full of concepts he had developed during his “Great War” with Barfield. In fact, the main contention of the titular essay is based on the enjoyment / contemplation distinction — that readers should not try to mix “imaginative apprehension” of a poem or drama with “unpoetic reflection” about the poet himself.

To see things as the poet sees them I must share his consciousness and not attend to it; I must look where he looks and not turn round to face him: I must make of him a (real) lie. Therefore, poetry does not tell us whether the particular things she describes actually exist; poetry “answers the question What”, while science “answers the question Whether.” Lewis ended his last essay in the controversy by proposing that the value of poetry resides 1) in being enjoyable, interesting and attractive, and 2) in its ability to help or hinder us toward all the other things that we would like to do (PH, 119-120).

This emphasis on what a poem does to the readers was to remain prominent in Lewis’ criticism, eventually providing the stimulus for his much later work, An Experiment in Criticism. Even a casual reading would reveal that the view of literature expressed in the later book is little different from that expressed earlier. Here again is an emphasis on the reader sharing the author’s consciousness (or using his “spectacles” or looking through his “window”) in order to view something else (EC, 137-139). Here is a similar emphasis on the “whatness” of the author’s experience, whether it is true historically or not. “What matters is his power to make us live it” (EC, 139). It is not a question of knowing that at all. If it is “knowing”, it is connaitre ("knowledge by acquaintance"), not savoir ("knowledge that"). We may “know” (connaitre) many things that do not exist, he said, because we have met them in great literature. “My own eyes are not enough for me, I will see through those of others. Reality, even seen through the eyes of many, is not enough. I will see what others have invented” (EC, 140).

What then, Lewis asked, is the good of “occupying our hearts” with stories that never happened or “entering vicariously” into feelings that would be immoral to harbour in ourselves? “The nearest that I have yet got to an answer is that we seek an enlargement of our being. We want to be more than ourselves” (EC, 137). In the following pages Lewis proceeded to resurrect his earlier concept of imagination as a “multiplying of consciousness.” But this was no longer the consciousness of Spirit but of the individual soul of man. Nor was this multiplying of consciousness to add “richness to the life of Spirit,” but to add richness to the life of each individual man:

Each of us by nature sees the whole world from one point of view with a perspective and a selectiveness peculiar to himself... We want to see with other eyes, to imagine with other imaginations, to feel with other hearts, as well as with our own.

A little further on, he used another concept from the Summa, but again in a new way. “Obviously this process can be described either as an enlargement or as a
temporary annihilation of the self. But that is an old paradox; “he that loseth his life shall save it” (EC, 138).

Lewis well understood, and in some sense shared, the sensibility of the English Romantics — that alienation of man from the world of Nature, and of man from man. For awhile Lewis had accepted a view of soul and Spirit that overcame that alienation philosophically, and seemed to give him a metaphysical base for what happened to him experientially during moments of imagination. He later rejected the metaphysical base, but could not reject what he had experienced from imaginative literature. Although modified and less pretentious, his post-conversion view of imagination still allowed him many of the benefits of his old view. Imaginative experience in literature, he said:

heals the wound, without undermining the privilege, of individuality... In reading great literature I become a thousand men and yet remain myself. Like the night sky in the Greek poem, I see with a myriad eyes, but it is still I who see. Here, as in worship, in love, in moral action, and in knowing, I transcend myself; and am never more myself than when I do. (EC, 140-141)

Ultimately then, if imagination did not keep its former status as the highest form of the spiritual life, it did retain a very high position indeed in Lewis' view of literature.

But Lewis did not limit the value of literature to its particular intrinsic goodness as an “expansion of being.” There was another “good” possible as well. For that, we must now return to Lewis’ essay, “Christianity and Culture.” Lewis had begun on a biographical note: “At an early age I came to believe that the life of culture (that is, of intellectual and aesthetic activity) was very good for its own sake, or even that it was good for man.” He went on:

After my conversion I continued to hold this belief without consciously knowing how it could be reconciled with my new belief that the end of human life was salvation in Christ and the glorifying of God. I was awakened from this confused state of mind by finding that the friends of culture seemed to me to be exaggerating. (CR, 12)

It is interesting to observe the term “exaggeration” used exactly as he had used it in his added Note to The Personal Heresy. They were written only a year apart, of course. Lewis was convinced that his former view of poetic imagination was not completely wrong; only that it had claimed too much.

The first half of “Christianity and Culture” dealt with his search to find a Christian sanction for the pursuit of culture — in his own case, literary culture. He concluded by saying:

My researches left me with the impression that there could be no question of restoring to culture the kind of status which I had given it before my conversion. If any constructive case for culture was to be built up it would have to be of a much humbler kind... (CR, 19)

Lewis then attempted to build a “case for culture.” He sought an ethical reason for engaging in cultural or literary activity, one that would be consistent with his Christian beliefs. He had begun the essay by denying a higher “spiritual” value to cultural activities. “The work of a charwoman and the work of a poet become spiritual in the same way and on the same condition... Let us stop giving ourselves airs.” He described the value of culture more humbly: Although not spiritual in themselves, cultural or literary activities may well be a road toward the spiritual.

He pointed to his own conversion as an example of the best one could hope for from cultural pursuit. Lewis believed that his experiences of Joy or “Romantic Sehnsucht” were crucial to his conversion. “Without them my conversion would have been more difficult,” he said in the essay. While such experiences may well lead in the opposite direction (and often has, he observed), for some it will lead them to Christ and Christianity. The best experiences and values of literature may be “sub-Christian,” but they reflect or imitate spiritual ones. “Though ‘like is not the same’, it is better than unlike. Imitation may pass into initiation. For some it is a good beginning,” he said (CR, 23).

Both of Lewis’ autobiographies, The Pilgrim’s Regress and Surprised by Joy, were written to show how the experience of Sehnsucht or Desire or Joy provided just such a “good beginning.” He even sub-titled the first, An Allegorical Apology for Christianity, Reason and Romanticism. Carnell has pointed out that Lewis’ (final) concept of Joy or Sehnsucht was a much humbler variety than the Romantics usually claimed. He accurately observed that Lewis’ view “can destroy Romanticism only for those who have enthroned it as God. Its proper validity as a way remains.” Although Lewis said in Surprised by Joy, “This lower life of the imagination is not a beginning of, nor a step toward, the higher life of the spirit,” he also added a footnote: “i.e. not necessarily and by its own nature. God can cause it to be such a beginning” (SBj, 167).

We may summarize the article in this way. There were two parts to Lewis’ move away from his views of the Summa toward his post-conversion views. First, Lewis moved the Spirit of man from its position as God to being a part of creation made by God; capitalized Spirit became a small spirit. Second, and based on the first, Lewis moved imagination from the realm of “Spirit” to the psyche; capitalized Imagination became small imagination. For he ended up believing imagination to be psychological, not spiritual — however it may be defined. Imagination became for Lewis neither “Spiritual” in the sense of “seeing as Spirit sees” (no longer an option in his new view of man’s Being), nor spiritual in the religious sense (he placed man’s Reason and Conscience, but not his imagination, in the created spirit of man). However, Lewis did leave room for imagination to be a way toward the spiritual in the religious sense — if God used it in such a way.
Abbreviations
(All references to Lewis’ and Barfield’s works in this essay are cited parenthetically in the text, using the abbreviations listed below.)

Lewis’ books Cited

Barfield’s Books Cited

Notes
15. All quotes from the “Great War” materials in this article are from previously published excerpts. Unless stated otherwise, they appear either in my article, “Knowing and Being in C.S. Lewis’ ‘Great War’ with Owen Barfield,” CSL: The Bulletin of the New York C.S. Lewis Society, 169 (Nov. 1983), 1-8; or in Lionel Adey’s book, C.S. Lewis’s “Great War” with Owen Barfield. English Literary Studies Monograph Series 14 (Victoria, B.C.: University of Victoria, 1978). My own tentative chronology would differ from that of Adey’s in his monograph.

16. During the “Great War,” Lewis used the terms “meaning” and “truth.” He would continue to use these two terms throughout most of his life. However, the terms were not the important thing. The important concept was the distinction between the “whatness” or “concreteness” or “quiddity” of things and the statements “that” such things existed. During the “Great War,” he called this “whatness” by the term meaning, and “thatness” by the term truth. Elsewhere, he used reality for the “whatness” and truth again for the “thatness” (GD, 66-67). Once, in The Pilgrim’s Regress, he used the terms truth and image for the “whatness” and the terms fact and very real for the “thatness” (PR, 170). This is only confusing if one does not see that in The Pilgrim’s Regress, Lewis was in some sense distinguishing “truth” and “fact.” The important distinction is the same, between the meaning and the fact of existence.

18. For examples, see Appendix A to Lewis’ Miracles, pp. 175-176, and his Screwtape Letters, pp. 36-37.

War and Our Priorities continued from page 4
To be able accept this invitation is a supreme honor, whether the duration is — as for the mayfly — a day, or for those fortunate few, a century. The duration is a minor consideration, almost an irrelevance, compared with the richness of the invitation itself. Yet in the end, the party for each individual must end, and we must come to terms with the fact that eventually it will be time to leave. C.S. Lewis’ grave is inscribed with the quote from Sheakespeare: “Men must endure their going hence.” The tragedy is not that the party must end, but that so many do not recognize that it is a party at all! They become distracted by the annoyances and hardships of life. It is as if they have gone to the verdant countryside in May to have a picnic, and then complain that there are some ants present, or that a crow is in the trees, or that they didn’t bring all the right drinks. They ignore the glorious weather, the flowers in bloom, the fresh breeze, the presence of good friends. We all pay too much attention to the ants sometimes, which in fact can bite, instead of looking at the flowers and feeling the breeze.

For many of us, faith gives us the hope that beyond the end of this “party” there is something more and better. And in this light, the invitation to life holds concealed within it a second invitation to an unending celebration where the good that was merely inferred here will become reality with a diamond-like solidity.

Lewis in The Great Divorce and Tolkien in his unique classic “Leaf by Niggle” — along with scatterings in Williams — give us what they sense this may be like. This affirmation is the key ingredient to Joy; it gives the validation and focus to what our very desires point to. Whether or not this life is the final word is up to the choice of the individual to accept this second invitation. Despite war, injustice, and death, those who can see beyond to share the Inklings’ vision, can repeat with the same gratitude what Niggle said: “It’s a gift!”

— Glen GoodKnight