

Bookreport FE546  
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## C.S. Lewis "The Problem of Pain"

"The Problem of Pain" is a very difficult book to read. It is full of new creative ideas to approach "The Problem of Pain". I feel I have just understood a part of it and reading it again and again might lead to find out more and more about "The Problem of Pain". In this way the book is like the Bible. Books like this are rare and precious.

What have I gotten from this book?

First of all human suffering is related to God's creation of human beings with a free will. Through their free will they also have the capability to hurt one another. Lewis sees that four-fifths of all suffering falls into this category.

Pain is classified according to the intensity. If the intensity of the pain is low it might not entail any suffering but just a recognition of a feeling. For example a mild pain after exercise might be experienced not as suffering but as a sign of an accomplishment. Pain that is disliked is suffering. This may be a mental or physical experience.

Lewis sees our being here as a kind of education. We have to learn to surrender ourselves to God. The tendency of humans is to be centered on their selves. It is necessary to learn to be centered about God and not ourselves. Pain is necessary to make us aware that there is something wrong with our concern just about ourselves. Pain is immediately recognizable evil and is evil impossible to ignore.

This is also expressed in the common notion that bad people ought to suffer for their bad deeds. This appeals to everyone's sense of justice, it is "giving a man what he deserves". Some people see punishment as a deterrence of others and as a reform of the offender. Lewis sees this as unjust: "What can be more immoral than to inflict suffering on me for the sake of deterring others if I do not *deserve* it?"

God uses pain to shatter the humans "illusion of self-sufficiency". Suffering can be the work of God to prepare us for another existence hereafter. Suffering may be a very gracious act by bringing people out of self-centeredness. Suffering shows us that we all must die one day. Suffering cannot cease on this world since it is intrinsically interwoven with God's redemptive work. Therefore it will last until God sees that this world is no longer redeemable or until this world is redeemed.

Humans are capable of sensing the divine and spiritual presence through the *Numinous*. The Numinous is a mixed feeling of awe and "dread". Lewis denies that this feeling can be caused by the natural world. It must have a supernatural object.

This Numinous was identified with the guardian of morale and ethics by the Jews and by great people of all times. Man has often revolted against this moral law since it is

impossible to be kept. The Jews knew his accessibility through faith and this was spread through the death and resurrection of Christ to the whole world.