



# C. S. LEWIS'S *THE GREAT DIVORCE*—THE MISUNDERSTOOD DYNAMICS BETWEEN THE SELF AND THE OTHER

Raluca Ștefania PELIN

Iasi University of Life Sciences (IULS)

## Abstract

'Love your neighbour as yourself' (NIV, Mark 12.31) and 'Do to others as you would have them do to you' (Luke 6.31) are the key commandments from the Bible and the drive of an emotionally intelligent existence. The inability of humans to abide by them creates a chasm between the *Self* and the *Other*. The *Self* defines and actualizes itself only in relation to *Another*. However, a great divorce ensues when the will, the ethical precepts, and the actions of humans fail to be responsibly exercised for the benefit of one's own *Self* and that of the *Other*. C. S. Lewis's fantasy *The Great Divorce* sheds light on the way the *Self* emerges as a consequence of making choices. The focus of this article is therefore on the reception of Lewis's book from the perspective of emotional intelligence, of Paul Ricoeur's *Oneself as Another* and Martin Buber's *I and Thou*, also resorting to concepts from Viktor Frankl's logotherapy and J. L. Austin's speech acts since in any relationship the *Self* is faced with *Another* and can only understand oneself and create meaning by accurately perceiving the *Others* and communicating with them.

**Keywords:** *self, another, logotherapy, emotional intelligence, speech acts*

## INTRODUCTION

The very first encounter of a reader with a book starts with the title, whereas the duration of the encounter is prolonged by the force this title exerts. C. S. Lewis's

Received: 14 February 2024 | Accepted: 04 May 2024 | Published: 30 June 2024

LINGUACULTURE VOL. 15, NO. 1, 2024 – C. S. Lewis – *The Re-enchanted Academic*, edited by Anne-Frédérique Mochel-Caballero and Teodora Ghivirigă

ISSN (print): 2067-9696 | ISSN (online): 2285-9403 | [www.journal.linguaculture.ro](http://www.journal.linguaculture.ro)

book title *The Great Divorce* faces the reader with a dilemma head-on: if there is a great divorce then there must have been a great marriage. Whose marriage? Could there have been such a thing as a Marriage of Heaven and Hell at which C. S. Lewis hints right at the beginning of his preface to the book? Well, there must have been the case when Hell did not exist even as a concept and Heaven was paradise. It was the human being as *I* in a perfect relationship and communication with the Eternal *Thou*. The great split occurred when the human being decided to use freedom in order to choose and doubt. As a consequence, human beings are continuously challenged with the demand, the chance, and the responsibility of making choices. Freedom can only have meaning and be meaningful if it is in relation to responsibility, otherwise it will degenerate into arbitrariness, as Viktor Frankl remarked in his book *Man's Search for Meaning* (134). Lewis himself writes in his Preface that we are always faced with the 'either-or': "if we 'accept Heaven we shall not be able to retain even the smallest and the most intimate souvenirs of Hell.'" (Lewis 466)

The greatest task of Man after the painful fall and the commencement of this process of divorce is to restore relation and communication as much as possible—within the limits set by a well understood, responsible freedom. Therefore, the greatest commands and imperatives 'Love your neighbour as yourself' (Mark 12.31) and 'Do to others as you would have them do to you' (Luke 6.31) are the rightful path toward reconciliation and redemption. These two grand imperatives represent the foundation of an emotionally intelligent existence and the core of effective interpersonal communication. The inability of humans to abide by these commandments creates an abyss between the *Self* and the *Other* as unbridgeable as that between Heaven and Hell. The *Self* defines and actualizes itself only in relation to *Another*. However, a great divorce ensues when the will, the ethical precepts, and the actions of humans fail to be happily married and responsibly exercised for the benefit of one's own *Self* and that of the *Other*.

C. S. Lewis's fantasy sheds light on the way the *Self* emerges as a consequence of making choices. The emotions experienced and enacted gain new meaning when expressed or experienced by the characters belonging to either group—the solid people or the ghosts. The language itself is used differently and with a marked effect by those belonging to either group

notwithstanding the fact that they both speak truly. Since all human existence is based on a clear understanding of one's nature, wills, knowledge, and the ability to communicate and find meaning, the focus of the present paper is on the reception of Lewis's book from the perspective of emotional intelligence, of Paul Ricoeur's *Oneself as Another*, and Martin Buber's *I and Thou*, also resorting to concepts from Viktor Frankl's logotherapy as key to man's search for meaning.

### **IAS ANOTHER – A UNIFYING PERSPECTIVE**

Starting from the two great commandments that bring together the human beings as *Self*, as *I*, and as *Another*, one can infer that the fullness of Being *I* can only be achieved by knowing the *Other*, having the right feelings for and acting toward the Good of the *Other*. The Golden Rule can only be fulfilled in mutual action, when the *I* realises that what he or she does to others may be done to him/her. Paul Ricoeur gets to the core of this when he asserts that "The Golden Rule and the imperative of the respect owed to persons do not simply have the same field of exercise, they also have the same aim: to establish reciprocity wherever there is a lack of reciprocity." (Ricoeur 225) Availability, writes Ricoeur, is "the key that opens self-constancy to the dialogic structure established by the Golden Rule." (268) Therefore, availability points to a willing act of putting oneself in the shoes of the *Other* with the aim of perceiving the world and the events from this one's perspective and of the resources one possesses so as to achieve the best for all the people involved in the relationship.

In "Love your neighbour as yourself!" the essence of what the *I-Thou* relation means—extensively explained by Martin Buber—and the role of love in this particular relation gain a profound meaning if considered from the perspective of Viktor Frankl's book *Man's Search for Meaning. The classic tribute to hope from the Holocaust*:

Love is the only way to grasp another human being in the innermost core of his personality. No one can become fully aware of the very essence of another human being unless he loves him. By his love he is enabled to see the essential traits and features in the beloved person; and even more, he sees that which is potential in him, which is not yet actualized but yet ought to be actualized. Furthermore, by his love, the loving person enables the beloved person to actualize these

potentialities. By making him aware of what he can be and of what he should become, he makes these potentialities come true. (Frankl 116)

The pillars that may hold the perfect construct of the *I-Thou* relation are represented by the understanding of the entities involved in the relation—as persons not as individuals or a mass—and the accurate perception of the roles of each entity and of the way in which language is used to support this construct.

Firstly, Martin Buber's work *I and Thou* sheds light on the way people relate to others. The *I* of a person can know the *Other*, the *Thou*, only in relation, and only with reference to the present time. This kind of relation is presented in parallel with the experience between *I* and *It*—in which *It* represents the objects that Man contemplates, experiences and uses, and can extract knowledge from. Paradoxically, mortals can become *It* and replace *Thou* for reasons that are obvious taking into consideration the functioning reasons for the *I-It* pair which have already been enumerated. There is no relation between *I* and *It*. The world of *It* is set in the context of space and time (hence events are perceived as *It*). Comparatively, the world of *Thou* is not set in the context of space and time, as it transcends them and is stored into Being, in the spiritual realm. Even though "...without *It*, man cannot live", the man "who lives with *It* alone", says Buber, "is not a man." (33) The mankind of *It* has nothing in common with the living mankind where *Thou* may be truly spoken, as it is "Through the *Thou* a man becomes *I*" (28). By acknowledging the *Other* and its presence, the *Self*—the *I*—takes shape, reaches full awareness.

Another important aspect that Buber highlights and is key to understanding the people inhabiting Hell in *The Great Divorce* is that community will arise when people, out of free, abundant feeling, approach and wish to live with one another. True community does not arise through people having mere feelings for one another, but through taking their stand in living mutual relation with a living centre, and secondly, their being in living mutual relation with one another: "The community is built up out of living mutual relation, but the builder is the living effective Centre." (Buber 45-46) It is precisely the *Thou* in this relation that can never become an *It* and that is the *Eternal Thou*. "Every particular *Thou* is a glimpse through to the eternal *Thou*; by means of every particular *Thou* the primary word addresses the eternal *Thou*." (Buber 75) Thus, to the twofold grasp of the emotionally intelligent competences in the light of which the Golden Rule

may be understood: to awareness of self and awareness of others, a third dimension should be added: that of the awareness of God, the only *Thou* whose Being is immutable and in relation to whom Man can make sense of his being and of that of the other: “if God is the ratio essendi of myself, he thereby becomes the ratio cognoscendi of myself” and “the idea of God is in me as the very mark of the author upon His work, a mark that assures the resemblance between us.” (Ricoeur 9) Since *I* and *Thou* are in the image of the perfect *Thou*, both Beings, both Selves, should strive to come into a unity that reflects the perfection of the Creating *Thou*. Thus, *idem* (sameness) and *ipso* (selfhood) merge into a perfect symbiosis—as Ricoeur finely renders it: “...selfhood of oneself implies otherness to such an intimate degree that one cannot be thought without the other, that instead one passes into the other...” (3). With this, we can grasp the perfect “marriage” of *I* to *Thou*.

Martin Buber highlights another crucial aspect which is related to the fact that relation means being chosen and choosing, suffering and acting: “Only he who knows relation and knows about the presence of the *Thou* is capable of decision. He who decides is free, for he has approached the Face.” (51) Destiny and freedom are bound in a meaning created in relation to the *Other*: “The free man is he who wills without arbitrary self-will. He believes in reality, that is, he believes in the real solidarity of the real twofold entity *I* and *Thou*.” (59)

What Frankl names “the self-transcendence of human existence” (115) denotes the fact that:

...being human always points, and is directed, to something, or someone, other than oneself—be it a meaning to fulfill or another human being to encounter. The more one forgets himself—by giving himself to a cause to serve or another person to love—the more human he is and the more he actualizes himself. What is called self-actualization is not an attainable aim at all, for the simple reason that the more one would strive for it, the more he would miss it. In other words, self-actualization is possible only as a side-effect of self-transcendence. (115)

Thus, *I* absorbed by *Thou* knows no more boundary—the Good that is done to the *Other* is a gain for the *Self*. Since *The Great Divorce* deals with beings that inhabit Hell, one should further reflect on what Buber writes about the “demonic *Thou*”, i.e. “To the demonic *Thou* no one can become *Thou*; no relations lead from him;

he sees the beings as machines, capable of various achievements, which must be taken into account and utilised for the Cause.” (68) What is more, he treats himself as an *It*: “It has no subjectivity, but it has also no self-consciousness concerned with its defined being” (68). Demonic spirit is averse to meaning (Buber 55) However, it is precisely meaning that keeps people alive and gives them a reason to live. The human beings need God in order to exist—“to be”—and God needs the human beings “for the very meaning” of their life. (Buber 82) “There is divine meaning in the life of the world, of man, of human persons, of you and of me.” (Buber 89) And this takes us to Viktor Frankl’s concept of meaning:

As each situation in life represents a challenge to man and presents a problem for him to solve, the question of the meaning of life may actually be reversed. Ultimately, man should not ask what the meaning of his life is, but rather he must recognize that it is he who is asked. In a word, each man is questioned by life; and he can only answer to life by answering for his own life; to life he can only respond by being responsible. Thus, logotherapy sees in responsibility the very essence of human existence. (113-114)

This emphasis on responsibility is reflected in the categorical imperative of logotherapy, which is: “Live as if you were living already for the second time and as if you had acted the first time as wrongly as you are about to act now!” (Frankl 114) Thus, human beings are constantly faced with transitory possibilities that they have to realize. They have to choose from a mass of potentialities those that are worth being fulfilled and turned into milestones of their existence, those that will be rescued and preserved from becoming transitory.

Last but not least, the *I-You* relation is reflected and fulfilled in the act of communicating. The Golden Rule relies on mutual relation and the language used to consolidate the relation between the agent—the one who does to others—and the receiver (or the patient)—the one who by receiving becomes aware of what he is expected to give, is one that gains in significance with every chosen word, meaning, intention and reaction to it. This is how Ricoeur presents this idea:

“Speech-act theory does not provide us in this respect with any more than the dialogic skeleton of highly diversified interpersonal exchanges” while “every advance made in the direction of the selfhood of the speaker or the agent has as its counterpart a comparable advance in the otherness of the partner.” (Ricoeur 44)

In human interaction communicating means more than just uttering words. By uttering the creating Words, the Eternal *Thou* acted and brought things into being. Similarly, Man acted upon the creation, *It*, by uttering words meant to define each and every being (Genesis 2.19-20). The serpent itself enticed the human beings into sinning by means of crafty words (Genesis 3.4). “If saying is doing, it is indeed in terms of acts that we must speak of saying. Here resides the major point of intersection with the theory of action . . . language is included in the very plane of action.” (Ricoeur 42-43) The human being acts upon the language by assigning it a certain force with the intention to act upon the listener and ultimately—if need be—motivate or convince the listener to resort to a certain kind of action as a consequence of the verbal interaction. Here, Ricoeur refers to John L. Austin’s theory of speech acts. At the locutionary speech level, the concept of “act” is already implied: “it is not statements that refer to something but the speakers themselves who refer in this way; nor do statements have a sense or signify something, but rather it is the speakers who mean to say this or that, who understand an expression in a particular sense.” (Ricoeur 43) The illocutionary act as predicative act consists in what the speaker does in speaking and the force of the uttering—taking the form of statements, questions or imperatives. The *I-Thou* relation therefore gains more depth and insight in that each interlocutor brings their own personality in the formulation of an utterance, reflected in the choice of words and the tone used:

The utterance that is reflected in the sense of the statement is therefore straightaway a bipolar phenomenon: it implies simultaneously an “I” that speaks and a “you” to whom the former addresses itself. “I affirm that” equals “I declare to you that”; “I promise that” equals “I promise you that.” In short, utterance equals interlocution. (Ricoeur 43-44)

The success of a speech act, however, resides in the ability of the receiver to infer and respond to the intention behind it appropriately. Thus, illocutionary speech

acts, such as thanking, apologising, criticising, requesting etc. are performative as they involve the speaker in an act of doing exactly what they are saying. Moreover, these performatives will trigger various reactions in the interlocutors themselves—based on the emotions with which the utterance was made—and will compel them to a verbal or behavioural reaction. Therefore, the perlocutionary acts, as intended effects upon the listener, are probably the most significant in understanding the emotional impact on the interlocutors and consequently their availability to act in response to what has been said to them. Having thus reflected on the aspects involved in the dynamics of the *I-Thou* at the level of communication and relation, a closer look at the interactions in *The Great Divorce* will reveal the glitches that lead to misunderstandings.

### **THE MISUNDERSTOOD I-THOU DYNAMICS IN THE GREAT DIVORCE**

The opening of the book throws the reader directly in the midst of an already disturbed relation. The setting itself is reflective of the mood: “the mean streets”, “dismal moment”, “posters hung in rags”, “a grey town”. The narrator attaches himself to the queue only to discover that the characters are paired in such a way that the *I* of one struggles to communicate with the *Thou* of the other, as for example the waspish woman who is addressed by a man in a very dignified voice. He has been trying to please the woman for the sake of peace. He admits to having surrendered his *Self*: “My own feelings are of course a matter of no importance...” (Lewis 467)

For the people in Hell Lewis chooses words that refer both to their appearance and to their character—“waspish woman”, “beefy person”, and “a short man with a scowl”. Their acts are qualified in relation to the field of violence—either verbal or physical: the Big Man “growled” (a sound made usually when one is angry), then “fetched the Short Man one on the side of the face that sent him sprawling into the gutter”; a female voice said with a “whine” that they were not going to make it. The entire atmosphere is indicative of a place that is populated with beings whose company is most unpleasant. The descriptive language Lewis uses has the role of activating a whole array of emotions. It is like setting the readers in a certain mood in order to be able to mentally and visually process every verbal and physical encounter that will take place.

The arrival of the bus brings a bit of hope since the Driver himself “seemed full of light”. His natural goodness is quickly judged as being unnatural—a sign that the people are obviously not prepared to approach the company of others different from them. Being too immersed in a certain way of perceiving things leaves no room for accepting differences.

In the description of the young tousle-haired youth, ‘Hell’ looks very similar to the present day world. Although he detests the company of people waiting for the bus, he actually adds to the grim atmosphere by venting his frustration and criticism towards those who did not deem his work as worthy. What Lewis does at this point in the narrative is to offer an in-depth analysis of the situation from the perspective of a keen psychologist: he is able to find the reason beyond the young man’s misfortune and unhappiness—a chain of broken *I-Thou* relations or of meaningless *I-It* experiences that have led him to bitterness and a hopeless world view.

The language the people from Hell use is mainly constative, verging on being judgmental. The illocutionary force of their utterings leads to reactions that are either emotional or leading to aggressive manifestations. Quarrels, fighting, threatening—this is the normal environment for the people from Hell. Even when they get off the bus there are “curses, taunts, blows, a filth of vituperation . . . as they struggled to get out.” (476) The intense emotions behind words and gestures immerse the readers into the very way of thinking or feeling of all the characters. The readers soon find out that distance in Hell is enlarged due to quarreling. Lewis is precise in rendering this distance in geo-spatial terms highlighting the stark reality of a discontinued communication on an *I-Thou* continuum. The distance is so vast that it leads to isolation. What we are witnessing here is a juxtaposition of people who are so accustomed to the *I-It* paradigm that any *I-Thou* form of communication seems indeed a heavenly enterprise.

Since the *I-Thou* relation is not bound by time, what is striking in *The Great Divorce* is that Time and Space in Hell are differently perceived—it takes centuries to get to the bus stop and the distance between people is so vast that it makes the chance of meeting famous people almost impossible. What is even more impressive in this relation that turns into an *I-It* paradigm is that, in Hell, people project their grand architectural designs cherished on Earth while their character suffers an augmentation of the negative traits already acquired or

practiced there. Napoleon, the only character that seemingly is “within” reach, lives in an impressive, huge Empire style house, is agitated and distressed, blaming everybody but himself for his defeats. For him everyone else was a useless *It*, whose incapacity of making his own *Self* pleased resulted in eternal misery. Hell is thus the realm of the purely *I-It* experience whereas Heaven appears as the realm of *I-Thou* for which only some are prepared and to which only some have the desire to accede.

People have no Needs in Hell—they get everything they want, even if the quality is questionable. However, the feeling of safety is illusory—the houses are just imaginary, they offer no protection, especially as night draws near. As the passengers approach Heaven, light and colour stun the eyes of the travellers. “Delicious freshness” (475) came through the windows, says the narrator. But the short moment of delight in approaching Heaven is interrupted by the intrusion of one passenger whose manner of speaking is so familiar to that on earth: “What the Hell are you doing?” shouted the Intelligent Man, leaning roughly across me and pulling the window sharply up. “Want us all to catch our death of cold?” (475)

The bus moves on and the light inside it reaches such an intensity that it reveals the faces of the passengers—full of “impossibilities” (Lewis 475). From Viktor Frankl’s point of view, these are the people who will not find meaning because there is no openness to such a possibility: “They were all fixed faces . . . distorted and faded. Then . . . I caught sight of my own.” (475) What C. S. Lewis is keenly aware of here is the mass of people, which makes it impossible to tell the Selves apart. It is certainly not a community and, all of a sudden, he perceives himself as a reflection in the mirror—he is a person facing himself. This is probably the moment of the greatest introspection of the *I* in relation to the mobbing *Thou* of those travelling on the bus. It is like an attestation of the *Self* summoning up “a trust in the power to say, in the power to do, in the power to recognize oneself as a character in the narrative” (Ricoeur 22).

Despite the commotion and cacophony created by the passengers who finally succeed in getting out of the bus upon arrival, the narrator manages to give the readers a glimpse into the sounds of Heaven: “through the open door there came to me in the fresh stillness the singing of a lark”. (Lewis 476) A painful realization strikes the reader when one of the passengers—now perceived as

ghosts—says about his fellow travellers: “They’re not enjoying it. They’d be far happier at home. They don’t even know what to do.” (478) This lack of purpose and meaning is completely unexpected in a place that was supposed to abound in them.

The solid people—the redeemed—are ageless. The one approaching the narrator made him “want to dance, it was so jocund, so established in its youthfulness” (Lewis 479). What follows is a very good example of how hard it is to establish an *I-Thou* relation, especially when one of the interlocutors is an unforgiving, self-righteous man in their own eyes and the other is a repentant murderer, ready to act for the benefit of the one who was not a murderer in the real sense of the word, but made more victims on earth precisely due to his inability to “love the other as oneself” and do to them as he would have liked to be done to him. The exchange of replies between the Big Man, now perceived as the Big Ghost and the solid spirit, is telling with regard to the force of the statements and the effect of them:

‘Well, I’m damned,’ said the Ghost. ‘I wouldn’t have believed it. It’s a fair knock-out. It isn’t right, Len, you know. What about poor Jack, eh? You look pretty pleased with yourself, but what I say is, What about poor Jack?’

‘He is here,’ said the other. ‘You will meet him soon, if you stay.’

‘But you murdered him.’

‘Of course, I did. It is all right now.’

‘All right, is it? All right for you, you mean. But what about the poor chap himself, laying cold and dead?’

‘But, he isn’t. I have told you, you will meet him soon. He sent you his love.’

‘What I’d like to understand,’ said the Ghost, ‘is what you’re here for, as pleased as Punch, you, a bloody murderer, while I’ve been walking the streets down there and living in a place like a pigsty all these years.’

‘That is a little hard to understand at first. But it is all over now. You will be pleased about it presently. Till then there is no need to bother about it.’

‘No need to bother about it? Aren’t you ashamed of yourself?’

‘No. Not as you mean. I do not look at myself. I have given up myself. I had to, you know, after the murder. That was what it did for me. And that was how everything began.’ (Lewis 479-80)

In his blinded hatred and conceited self-righteousness, the Big Man has no chance of seeing the *Other* as a totally new, redeemed *Self*. He fails to grasp the truth that a repentant *Self* can be restored to a new One, that can be in Heaven, in relation to the Eternal *Thou*. He refuses outright the Bleeding Charity because he cannot grasp the fact that in it lies the whole mystery and miracle of bringing the human being back to a perfect relation with the Creating, Eternal *Thou*. The dialogue abounds in constatives, in statements that are judgmental and critical. The questions do not have the expected effect in this *I-Thou* confrontation because Heaven is—as Lewis, the narrator, claims—a land of answers. The key is only to be finely tuned and ready to accept the unexpected answers as the Truth. The sinful *I* is no longer stirred by such questions since it has undergone a change in paradigm. The *I* has lost its selfishness, has found the real meaning of one's acts and consequences and has freely decided to forget the *Self* and serve the selves of others on the way to redemption.

The dialogue of one of the solid people and the Ghost of a famous artist reveals the way the *Self* becomes a Person—to which Martin Buber referred as being the right name of the Being in a true *I-Thou* relation. Having the attribute of a person is the reality of all men being equal and equally displaying the same traits when in Heaven: "...When you've grown into a Person (it's all right, we all had to do it) there'll be some things which you'll see better than anyone else. One of the things you'll want to do will be to tell us about them." (Lewis 512) In Heaven there are no longer "distinguished people" because "The Glory flows into everyone, and back from everyone: like light and mirrors. But the light's the thing." The artist then asks perplexed and rather disappointed: "[do] you mean there are no famous men?" To which the Spirit replies: "They are all famous. They are all known, remembered, recognised by the only Mind that can give a perfect judgement." (512)

A very potent example of how an *I* can turn the *Thou* into an *It* up to the point of exhaustion is in Chapter 10: the narrator faithfully renders an overheard conversation between a female Ghost and one of the bright Women. The female Ghost refuses to remain in Heaven if she is expected to meet her husband, Robert. Her words echo the thoughts of many Christians: "I forgive him as a Christian . . . But there are some things one can never forget." (Lewis 515) From her uninterrupted account the reader finds out that this wife has turned her

husband into a sheer marionette, an object meant to meet all her needs and attain all her dreams. His *Self* has been completely annihilated under the pressure of a highly demanding *I*. Her speech testifies to the strategies that ruin the harmony within a marriage: “I had to positively nag him”, “The laziness of men”, “I had married him”, “Well, I got him into the new house at last”, “I did my duty to the very end. I forced him to take exercise”, “How could I help it if he did have a nervous breakdown in the end? My conscience is clear. I’ve done my duty by him.” She ends her plea with something that can be perceived as even worse: “...if I’m given a free hand I’ll take charge of him again. . . . He’s not fit to be on his own. Put me in charge of him. He wants firm handling. . . There’s lots, lots, lots of things I still want to do with him.” She finally admits that it is so frightful in Hell and she is “so miserable” that she “must have someone to—to do things to” (513-15). The obsessive focus on the *I* in all her statements shows that there is no space for the *Other* and that all these statements are meant to annihilate any free will of the interlocutor. To bring to light her incapacity to see where she is wrong, her rhetorical question toward the end of her intervention echoes the bitter sarcasm of the author: “Why should he have everything his own way?” (516)

Another meeting in Chapter 11 sheds light on what it takes to be able to love the *other* as *oneself*: “You cannot love a fellow creature fully till you love God.” (Lewis 518) The meeting between the Lady and the Tragedian in Chapter 12 also points to the fact that in Heaven people understand true love, compared to the love on earth that tends to turn the *Other* as *Thou* into an *It*:

‘I am in love. In love, do you understand? Yes, now I love truly.’

‘You mean,’ said the Tragedian, ‘you mean—you did not love me truly in the old days.’

‘Only in a poor sort of way,’ she answered. ‘I have asked you to forgive me. There was a little real love in it. But what we called love down there was mostly the craving to be loved. In the main I loved you for my own sake: because I needed you.’ (531)

As the book draws to its end, the narrator highlights again the requirement for the perfect dynamics between the *Self* and the *Other*—the “loveless and the self-imprisoned” should consent “to be happy (in their own terms)” and only then would everyone else “taste joy”. The day must come “when joy prevails and all the

makers of misery are no longer able to infect it: or else for ever and ever the makers of misery can destroy in others the happiness they reject for themselves.” (Lewis 536)

## CONCLUSIONS

In *The Great Divorce* C. S. Lewis masterfully presents all the rifts that can lead to the collapse of the grand project called marriage, which designates not only the unbreakable union between the *I* and *Thou*, but also the agreement of one's ideas in one's head, the agreement with the Truth of the Eternal *Thou* and as a consequence the agreement with the *Other* created in the image of the perfect *I*. Moreover, marriage may refer here to the appropriate merging of words into utterances that naturally lead to appropriate reactions and actions of the interlocutors engaged in conversation.

The dynamics between the *Self* and the *Other* can only be understood and lead to favourable outcomes if driven by responsibility accompanied by unconditional love in the spirit of equality. When the *I* realises that he or she is equal to *Thou* and they both share sameness in everything that pertains to life, responsible love will be reflected in communication, in the modulating force of the utterance which will yield desirable effects. If the dynamics is powered by other reasons than the Good of the interlocutors, then each of them will become an *It* caught in the trap of the manipulative words and actions of the others. The kind of dynamics presented in *The Great Divorce* can be extended to any form of human interaction.

What one should not fail to grasp from Lewis's text is that in Heaven the *I-Thou* relations can only be solid and valid if they abide by the Golden Rule according to which the *I* should only act for the benefit of the *Other* as if they were doing it for themselves. Moreover, the *I-Thou* relation in which the *I* of the Son of God chose to identify with the *Thou* of the mortal human being made it possible for the human being to come into an *I-Thou* relation with God the Father similar to that of Jesus Christ himself and to that of the first Adam in the Garden of Eden. Thus, Heaven is a reflection of the paradise lost, a reinstatement of the communion with the Creator, the Eternal *Thou*, which existed before the Great Divorce.

## Works Cited

- The New International Version Bible*. <https://www.biblegateway.com/>. Accessed 23 October 2023.
- Austin, John Langshaw. *How to Do Things with Words*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962.
- Buber, Martin. *I and Thou*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Claark, Hesperides Press, 2008.
- Frankl, Viktor E. *Man's Search for Meaning. The classic tribute to hope from the Holocaust*. London: Rider, 2004.
- Lewis, C. S. *The C. S. Lewis Signature Classics*. New York: HarperOne. An Imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, 2017.
- Ricoeur, Paul. *Oneself As Another*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992.

## BIONOTE

**Raluca Ștefania PELIN** is an assistant lecturer at “Ion Ionescu de la Brad” Iași University of Life Sciences, where she teaches English for Specific Purposes. The main focus of her research is the integration of concepts related to emotional intelligence and emotional literacy skills into the study of literary and non-literary texts. Her interest in observing the way in which patterns of emotional intelligence are intrinsic to literary works has materialized in the publication of several articles: “The Coral Island vs. Lord of the Flies Variations in Emotional Intelligence Skills”, “C. S. Lewis's Narnia and J. R. R. Tolkien's Middleearth: Realms of Emotionally Intelligent Characters”, “Emotions and Emotional Intelligence Beyond Words in the Poetry of Rose Ausländer, Selma-Meerbaum Eisinger, Paul Celan, and Dan Pagis”, etc.

**E-mail:** [ralucapelin@yahoo.com](mailto:ralucapelin@yahoo.com)