

**Review: C. S. Lewis, Miracles: A Preliminary Study, Fount, London, 1947 (1974 edn.)**

Pages: 190

**An Exposé of Naturalism**

This collection of short essays contains some clear thinking and philosophical foundations, especially in regards to what naturalists *already assume* without thinking.

On two major fronts naturalism fails: (i) that Nature's regularity must simply be assumed as a brute fact *before* experience can be used to 'prove' it; (ii) 'reason' is irrational as it arose sometime in the past from *irrational* components of Nature. This failure means the only other option of *supernaturalism* must be true, so miracles therefore are admitted.

However, when Lewis turns to theology there are some major errors to be wary of; e.g., a belief in [theistic] evolution] (p 126); in giving men and angels free will God surrendered part of his omnipotence (\_\_\_\_, p 142); trans-sexual would be better than "sexless" for the heavenly life [!] (p. 164); recommending seekers begin with corrupt New Testament Moffat or Monsignor Knox translations (p. 168).

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**I) The Scope of This Book (pp. 7-8)**

Whether miracles occur can never be answered by experience, for in they end they must always present to our senses [so would be sensory experiences].

Normal historical enquiry cannot be made into the subject *before* it is decided whether miracles are possible or not.

If immensely improbable only mathematical evidence will convince, but history is not a set of probabilities.

The philosophical question must come first.

John's gospel must obviously have been before Peter's death.

## **II) The Naturalist and the Supernaturalist (p. 9-15)**

Naturalists hold there is nothing but nature. Those who believe in anything additional are *supernaturalists*.

*Natura* is to be born.

## **III) The Cardinal Difficulty of Naturalism (pp. 16-28)**

Unless human reasoning is valid no science is.

Any event must be part of a causal chain going from the beginning and extending to the end of time.

If Nature is all there is, reason must be its product so there was a time when it was not and thoughts were not rational.

Response and stimulus are different from knowledge and truth.

## **IV) Nature and Supernature (pp. 29-37)**

“Between Reason and Nature is an Unsymmetrical Relation”.

Sooner or later self-existent Reason must be admitted.

Immanuel Kant's “I think” is needed for every thought.

A form of pantheism might hold that a certain order of all particles in the universe might give rise to a universal consciousness, however, it would be irrational begin the product of irrational constituents.

The main obstacle of Dualism is conceiving of two things somehow co-existing yet having no interaction.

## **V) A Further Difficulty in Naturalism (pp. 38-42)**

**VI) Answers to Misgivings (pp. 43-48)**

A complete philosophy must cover *all* the facts.

**VII) A Chapter of Red Herrings (pp. 49-58)**

“People in olden times only believed since they didn’t know the laws of nature.”

Nothing can seem extraordinary until you have discovered what is ordinary.

**VIII) Miracle and the Laws of Nature (pp. 59-66)**

Conceptions of the “Laws” of Nature are either: 1) brute facts; 2) an application of the law of averages, so in essence random.

If laws are assumed necessary miracles are impossible.

**IX) A Chapter Not Strictly Necessary (pp. 67-71)**

Only supernaturalists can really see nature.

**X) ‘Horrid Red Things’ (pp. 72-84)**

**XI) Christianity and ‘Religion’ (pp. 85-98)**

The human mind is inclined to pantheism.

German worship was of a racial spirit.

Things outside of God don’t not have existence as their essence. One can always distinguish *what* they are from *whether* they are or not.

**XII) The Propriety of Miracles (pp. 99-103)**

**XIII) On Probability (pp. 104-111)**

David Hume (Treatise of Human Nature I.III.vi): “Probability is found on the presumption of a resemblance between those objects we have had experience and those we have had none.”

Uniformity must be assumed before it can be invoked to prove anything by experience. Furthermore, it can't be tested via probability since probabilities are dependent on Nature.

‘Probability’ of miracles is therefore nonsense.

Apparent irregularity is what prompts new hypotheses and scientific advancement. This in turn derives from an intrinsic belief in a trustworthy Legislator, else science is invalid.

#### **XIV) The Grand Miracle (pp. 112-135)**

The so-called “Grand Miracle” is infinitely improbable according to Hume since it only happened once. However, this is the case for every mundane event in history.

Adonis and Osiris were personifications of corn; corn-kings which died and rose again each year.

The Chosen People are so in order that the unchosen may be saved.

The Stoics regarded death with indifference.

#### **XV) Miracles of the Old Creation (pp. 136-146)**

Supposed non-Christian miracles in some cases are illogical, e.g., in Buddhism, the Buddha's miracles over nature only help to reinforce its reality rather than illusory nature.

Christ's miracles may be grouped as: Fertility; Healing; Destruction; Dominion; Reversal; Glorification.

*Vis medicatrix naturae* is “healing power of nature”.

#### **XVI) Miracles of the New Creation (pp. 147-167)**

“Lawless applied science is magic’s son and heir.”

“A clock can’t run down till it has been wound up”.

### **Epilogue (pp. 168-172)**

Lewis recommends seekers begin with the New Testament Moffat translation, or Monsignor Knox.

### **Appendix A: On the Words ‘Spirit’ and ‘Spiritual’ (pp. 173-177)**

-Chemical.

-Medical: spirit-fluids of the body (obsolete).

-Immateriality.

-Supernatural element given to every man by God at his creation.

Ancient philosophers regarded the body as a mere encumbrance.

### **Appendix B: On ‘Special Providences’ (pp. 178-185)**

A Divine intelligence is capable of contriving the “plot” of the universe.

To God, all physical events are present in an eternal Now.