

Study guide

Lewis, Clive Staples. *Miracles*, Macmillan Publishing Company, 1978. In chapter 3 of this book, “The cardinal difficulty of naturalism”, Lewis argues that naturalism is self-refuting.

“If my mental processes are determined wholly by the motions of atoms in my brain, I have no reason to suppose that my beliefs are true...and hence I have no reason for supposing my brain to be composed of atoms.”

—Professor Haldane, *Possible Worlds*, p. 209.

1. Events or objects can be explained in at least two ways: Cause and Reason
 - 1.1. Cause: He is sick because he ate lobster yesterday
 - 1.2. Reason: He is sick because he did not get out of bed this morning.
2. A *cause* is more akin to an (Aristotelian efficient cause); a *reason* is more like a rational inference.
3. *Naturalism* is the philosophy that nature forms a closed (total) system of cause and effect.
4. Insofar as the philosophy of naturalism adopts molecules-to-man evolution, it teaches that sentience and rational thought are “late comers”; the type of thinking that we now call “rational thinking” must have evolved by natural selection. And natural selection is not a process that is designed to find truth, but only to produce a survival advantage. (p. 18, 19)
5. Naturalism, taken as a philosophy, undercuts the validity of rational inference. For the type of thinking that we now call “rational thinking” must have evolved by natural selection.
6. Lewis argues that if we have the ability to construct true and reliable accounts of nature based on rational thought, the ability to do so must come from *outside* of nature. (p. 22)
7. Is our use of reason reliable?
 - 7.1. Man is a fallen creature, and is corrupt; reason, like all of our other abilities is corrupt in the sense that it cannot earn our salvation.
 - 7.2. But then again, neither can our sight or our hearing earn our salvation. But we do not then say that sight and hearing are utterly unreliable; only unreliable for earning salvation.

7.3. When we critique “human reason”, in many cases we are critiquing specific assumptions that we had been tacitly making without realizing it. For example when we teach the dual nature of Christ—Jesus is both God and Man—this is said to contradict reason. It is a paradox. But then again, paradoxes occur in science. Consider quantum theory and wave-particle duality (Lewis briefly mentions this on p. 13)