

Miracles by C. S. Lewis
Outline

- I. Ch. 1, Intro, “The Scope of This Book”
 - A. Author (Lewis) knows only one person that has seen a ghost, but that person doesn't believe in them.
 - i. Seeing is not believing
 - B. Possibility of miracles cannot be answered by experience
 - i. All experiences are presented to our senses
 - ii. Our senses are not infallible
 - iii. Incredible experiences are always open to the claim of illusion
 - a) If our philosophy excludes the supernatural, we'll always claim that
 - iv. Philosophical question must be settled first.
 - C. Possibility of miracles cannot be answered by history
 - i. Ordinary rules of history are of no avail if our philosophy precludes miracles
 - ii. If our philosophy allows for miracles, history will convince us a number have occurred
 - iii. Philosophical question must be settled first
 - D. Example: commentary on John
 - i. Assumes it was written *after* Peter's death because it *predicts* Peter's death
 - a) Author never discusses the basis for his philosophy but he is arguing *against* the historical evidence because he thinks it is impossible.
 - b) His work cannot help us to know *whether* predictions occur
 - E. Purpose of this book
 - i. A preliminary to historical inquiry
 - ii. Author not a trained historian
 - iii. This book is to prepare the reader(s) to do so (study the historical evidence)
 - iv. Looking at the text to determine whether miracles happen while assuming miracles can't happen is begging the question.
- II. Ch. 2 The Naturalist and the Supernaturalist
 - A. Definitions
 - i. “Miracle” defined: “an interference with Nature by supernatural power.”
 - a) Unless there is something other than nature, miracles cannot happen.
 - ii. “Naturalists” believe there is nothing other than nature.
 - iii. “Supernaturalists” believe something else exists other than nature
 - iv. “Nature” must be defined, difficult to find in current discussions
 - a) Appeal to common usage
 - “natural teeth”
 - “natural state” of dogs have fleas
 - someone wants to get away from the city and into “Nature”
 - Being “natural” not artificial
 - it felt “natural” to kiss her
 - Common usage summary
 - In all these cases Nature means what happens 'of itself' or 'of its own accord'
 - don't need to labor for it
 - it is what happens if you don't take measures to stop it
 - b) Appeal to Greek; “to grow”

- c) Appeal to Latin: “to be born”
 - d) Common denominator: what happens “of its own accord”
- B. Discussions
- i. Review of Naturalist's belief
 - a) A system in which every particular event happens because some other event has happened
 - b) In the long run, because the Total Event has happened
 - c) all events are completely interlocked
 - d) No true naturalist believes in free will
 - Free will would mean that human beings have the power of independent action, of doing something more than what was involved in the events
 - ii. Review of Supernaturalist's belief
 - a) Believes in existence of some basic Fact as the ground or starting point for explanation of all that is.
 - b) This “Fact” is not the 'whole show', there are two things
 - One Thing (or many) which exists on its own
 - Things which are derived from the One Thing
 - c) The One Thing causes all the rest to be
 - It created them
 - d) The One Thing sustains all the rest
 - they will cease to exist if it ever ceases to maintain them in existence
 - They will be altered if he alters them
 - iii. Comparing the two views
 - a) Naturalism is democratic
 - each thing equally important
 - b) Supernaturalism is monarchical
 - some things more important
 - iv. Origin of the two views
 - a) Problem: perhaps idea of supernaturalism arose in (past) monarchical societies
 - Not being a valid belief we should now discard it
 - b) Answer: we could just as easily posit that idea of naturalism arises in our (current) democratic societies
 - Being as both implications are invalid we can't justify throwing out one or the other belief on that basis
 - v. Identity of “One Thing:” God or the gods (obviously)
 - a) Author proposes to work only with identity of One Thing as monotheism
 - it is unlikely his readers are polytheists
 - most polytheists rarely regarded their gods as either creators of the universe or self-existent
 - Example of gods of ancient Greece
 - vi. Comparison of differences
 - a) Difference between naturalism/supernaturalism is not the same as the difference between theism/atheism
 - Naturalism could believe in a god that is the result of nature or concurrent with nature.
 - They could think that human consciousness arose “by nature” and that an indwelling 'God' could arise concurrently.

vii. Identity of “nature”

a) True difference between naturalism/supernaturalism

- Naturalist believes a great process or “becoming” exists “on its own” in space/time
- Supernaturalist believes that one Thing exists on its own and has produced the framework of space/time and the events that fill them
 - this framework he calls “nature”
 - there may be other systems or natures created by the one Thing
 - These other systems are not different solar systems, for those would only be remote parts of our nature, but these different systems would be different universes altogether
 - These other systems are not necessarily directly related to our nature
 - They may not be spatio-temporal at all
 - Their time/space may not be related to ours
 - They would be indirectly related by having the same one creator
 - like different stories by the same author
 - God may somehow cause the two unrelated systems to have some limited connections
 - Selected events in one system may produce results in the other
 - partial interlocking possible by design
 - still would be different natures (different universes)
 - any connections would not be from the natures themselves but by the divine act in bringing them together
 - Thus, the actions of the one on the other would be “supernatural” in relation to the other
 - The other kind of miracle would not be related to any other nature at all but would be a direct divine “interference”

C. Conclusion

- i. Existence of this one Thing (supernaturalism) does not necessitate miracles
- ii. Existence of other possible natures (don't have a word for this) does not necessitate any interlocking with each other
- iii. If there is a one Thing (supernaturalism) we cannot say that nature is safe from miracles
- iv. If there is not one Thing (naturalism) miracles are impossible
 - a) Nothing can get in to nature from without because there is no other thing and there is no “without” to come from
 - We might mistake things for miracles, but they would merely be the result of things within the system.
- v. Our first choice must be between these two systems.