

Appendices to ‘What Lewis really did to *Miracles*’

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- A. C. S. Lewis: *Miracles*, first edition (1947), chapter III
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Appendix A

C. S. Lewis: *Miracles*, first edition (1947), chapter III

C. S. Lewis, *Miracles: A Preliminary Study* (Geoffrey Bles, London 1947), pp. 23-31. Page numbers from this edition are inserted in square brackets. The revised edition of 1960 has been available ever since, although that edition was not published in the U.S. until 1978.

III. *The Self-Contradiction of the Naturalist*

We cannot have it both ways, and no sneers at the limitations of logic ... amend the dilemma.

I. A. RICHARDS, *Principles of Literary Criticism*, chap. xxv.

If Naturalism is true, every finite thing or event must be (in principle) explicable in terms of the Total System. I say ‘explicable in *principle*’ because of course we are not going to demand that naturalists, at any given moment, should have found the detailed explanation of every phenomenon. Obviously many things will only be explained when the sciences have made further progress. But if Naturalism is to be accepted we have a right to demand that every single thing should be such that we see, in general, how it could be explained in terms of the Total System. If any one thing exists which is of such a kind that we see in advance the impossibility of ever giving it *that kind* of explanation, then Naturalism would be in ruins. If necessities of thought force us to allow to any one thing any degree of independence from the Total System – if any one thing makes good a claim to be on its own, to be something more than an expression of the character of Nature as a whole – then we have abandoned Naturalism. For by Naturalism we mean the doctrine that only Nature – the whole interlocked system – exists. And if that were true, every thing and event would, if we knew enough, be explicable without remainder (no *heel-taps*) as a necessary product of the system. The whole [24] system being what it is, it ought to be a contradiction in terms if you were not reading this book at the moment; and, conversely, the only cause why you are reading it ought to be that the whole system, at such and such a place and hour, was bound to take that course.

One threat against strict Naturalism has recently been launched on which I myself will base no argument, but which it will be well to notice. The older scientists believed that the smallest particles of matter moved according to strict laws: in other words, that the movements of each particle were ‘interlocked’ with the total system of Nature. Some modern scientists seem to think – if I understand them – that this is not so. They seem to think that the individual unit of matter (it would be rash to call it any longer a ‘particle’) moves in an indeterminate or random fashion; moves, in fact, ‘on its own’ or ‘of its own accord’. The regularity which we observe in the movements of the smallest visible bodies is explained by the fact that each of these contains millions of units and that the law of averages therefore levels out the idiosyncrasies of the individual unit’s behaviour. The movement of one unit is incalculable, just as the result of tossing a coin once is incalculable: the majority movement of a billion units can however be predicted, just as, if you tossed a coin a billion times, you could predict a nearly equal number of heads and tails. Now it will be noticed that if this theory is true we have really admitted something other than Nature. If the movements of the individual units are events ‘on their own’, events which do not interlock with all other events, then these movements are not part of Nature. It would be, indeed, too great a shock to our habits to describe them as *super*-natural. I think we should have to call them *sub*-natural. But all our confidence that Nature has no doors, and no reality outside herself for doors to open on, would have disappeared. There is apparently *something* outside her, the Subnatural; it is indeed from this Subnatural that all events and all ‘bodies’ are, as it were, fed into her. And clearly if she thus has a back door opening [25] on the Subnatural, it is quite on the cards that she may also have a front door opening on the Supernatural – and events might be fed into her at that door too.

I have mentioned this theory because it puts in a fairly vivid light certain conceptions which we shall have to use later on. But I am not, for my own part, assuming its truth. Those who (like myself) have had a philosophical rather than a scientific education find it almost impossible to believe that the scientists really mean what they seem to be saying. I cannot help thinking they mean no more than that the movements of individual units are permanently incalculable *to us*, not that they are in themselves random and lawless. And even if they mean the latter, a layman can hardly feel any certainty that some new scientific development may not to-morrow abolish this whole idea of a lawless Subnature. For it is the glory of science to progress. I therefore turn willingly to other ground.

It is clear that everything we know, beyond our own immediate sensations, is inferred from those sensations. I do not mean that we begin as children, by regarding our sensations as ‘evidence’ and thence arguing consciously to the existence of space, matter, and other people. I mean that if, after we are old enough to understand the question, our confidence in the existence of anything else (say, the solar system or the Spanish Armada) is challenged, our argument in defence of it will have to take the form of inferences from our immediate sensations. Put in its most general form the inference would run, ‘Since I am presented with colours, sounds, shapes, pleasures and pains which I cannot perfectly predict or control, and since the more I investigate them the more regular their behaviour appears, therefore there must exist something other than myself and it must be systematic’. Inside this very general inference, all sorts of special trains of inference lead us to more detailed conclusions. We infer [26] Evolution from fossils: we infer the

existence of our own brains from what we find inside the skulls of other creatures like ourselves in the dissecting room.

All possible knowledge, then, depends on the validity of reasoning. If the feeling of certainty which we express by words like *must be* and *therefore* and *since* is a real perception of how things outside our own minds really 'must' be, well and good. But if this certainty is merely a feeling in our own minds and not a genuine insight into realities beyond them – if it merely represents the way our minds happen to work – then we can have no knowledge. Unless human reasoning is valid no science can be true.

It follows that no account of the universe can be true unless that account leaves it possible for our thinking to be a real insight. A theory which explained everything else in the whole universe but which made it impossible to believe that our thinking was valid, would be utterly out of court. For that theory would itself have been reached by thinking, and if thinking is not valid that theory would, of course, be itself demolished. It would have destroyed its own credentials. It would be an argument which proved that no argument was sound – a proof that there are no such things as proofs – which is nonsense.

We must believe in the validity of rational thought, and we must not believe in anything inconsistent with its validity. But we can believe in the validity of thought only under certain conditions. Consider the following sentences. (1) 'He thinks that dog dangerous because he has often seen it muzzled and he has noticed that messengers always try to avoid going to that house.' (2) 'He thinks that dog dangerous because it is black and ever since he was bitten by a black dog in childhood he has always been afraid of black dogs.'

Both sentences explain *why* the man thinks as he does. [27] But the one explanation substantiates the value of his thought, the other wholly discredits it. Why is it that to discover the cause of a thought sometimes damages its credit and sometimes reinforces it? Because the one cause is a good cause and the other a bad cause? But the man's complex about black dogs is not a bad cause in the sense of being a weak or inefficient one. If the man is in a sufficiently pathological condition, it may be quite irresistible and, in that sense, as good a cause for his belief as the Earth's revolution is for day and night. The real difference is that in the first instance the man's belief is caused by something rational (by argument from observed facts) while in the other it is caused by something irrational (association of ideas).

We may in fact state it as a rule that no *thought is valid if it can be fully explained as the result of irrational causes*. Every reader of this book applies this rule automatically all day long. When a sober man tells you that the house is full of rats or snakes, you attend to him: if you know that his belief in the rats and snakes is due to *delirium tremens* you do not even bother to look for them. If you even *suspect* an irrational cause, you begin to pay less attention to a man's beliefs; your friend's pessimistic view of the European situation alarms you less when you discover that he is suffering from a bad liver attack. Conversely, when we discover a belief to be false we then first look about for irrational causes ('I was tired' – 'I was in a hurry' – 'I wanted to believe it'). The whole disruptive power of Marxism and Freudianism against traditional beliefs has lain in their claim to expose irrational causes for them. If any Marxist is reading these lines at this moment, he is murmuring to himself, 'All this argument really results from the fact that the author is a bourgeois' – in fact he is applying the rule I have just stated. Because he thinks that my thoughts result from an irrational cause he

therefore discounts them. All thoughts which are so caused [28] are valueless. We never, in our ordinary thinking, admit any exceptions to this rule.

Now it would clearly be preposterous to apply this rule to each particular thought as we come to it and yet not to apply it to all thoughts taken collectively, that is, to human reason as a whole. Each particular thought is valueless if it is the result of irrational causes. Obviously, then, the whole process of human thought, what we call Reason, is equally valueless if it is the result of irrational causes. Hence every theory of the universe which makes the human mind a result of irrational causes is inadmissible, for it would be a proof that there are no such things as proofs. Which is nonsense.

But Naturalism, as commonly held, is precisely a theory of this sort. The mind, like every other particular thing or event, is supposed to be simply the product of the Total System. It is supposed to be that and nothing more, to have no power whatever of 'going on of its own accord'. And the Total System is not supposed to be rational. All thoughts whatever are therefore the results of irrational causes, and nothing more than that. The finest piece of scientific reasoning is caused in just the same irrational way as the thoughts a man has because a bit of bone is pressing on his brain. If we continue to apply our Rule, both are equally valueless. And if we stop applying our Rule we are no better off. For then the Naturalist will have to admit that thoughts produced by lunacy or alcohol or by the mere wish to disbelieve in Naturalism are just as valid as his own thoughts. What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. The Naturalist cannot condemn other people's thoughts because they have irrational causes and continue to believe his own which have (if Naturalism is true) equally irrational causes.

The shortest and simplest form of this argument is that given by Professor J. B. S. Haldane in *Possible Worlds* (p. 209). He writes, 'If my mental processes are determined wholly [29] 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'. If I have avoided this form of the argument, this is because I do not wish to have on our hands at this stage so difficult a concept as Matter. The trouble about atoms is not that they are material (whatever that may mean) but that they are, presumably, irrational. Or even if they were rational they do not produce my beliefs by honestly arguing with me and proving their point but by compelling me to think in a certain way. I am still subject to brute force: my beliefs have irrational causes.

An attempt to get out of the difficulty might be made along the following lines. Even if thoughts are produced by irrational causes, still it might happen by mere accident that some of them were true – just as the black dog might, after all, have been really dangerous though the man's reason for thinking it so was worthless. Now individuals whose thoughts happened, in this accidental way, to be truer than other people's would have an advantage in the struggle for existence. And if habits of thought can be inherited, natural selection would gradually eliminate or weed out the people who have the less useful types of thought. It might therefore have come about by now that the present type of human mind – the sort of thought that has survived – was tolerably reliable.

But it won't do. In the first place, this argument works only if there are such things as heredity, the struggle for existence, and elimination. But we know about these things – certainly about their existence in the past – only by inference. Unless, therefore, you start by assuming inference to be valid, you cannot know about them. You have to assume that inference is valid before you can even begin

your argument for its validity. And a proof which sets out by assuming the thing you have to prove, is rubbish. But waive [30] that point. Let heredity and the rest be granted. Even then you cannot show that our processes of thought yield truth unless you are allowed to argue 'Because a thought is useful, therefore it must be (at least partly) true'. But this is itself an inference. If you trust it, you are once more assuming that very validity which you set out to prove.

In order to avoid endless waste of time we must recognise once and for all that this will happen to any argument whatever which attempts to prove or disprove the validity of thought. By trusting to argument at all you have assumed the point at issue. All arguments about the validity of thought make a tacit, and illegitimate, exception in favour of the bit of thought you are doing at that moment. It has to be left outside the discussion and simply believed in, in the simple old-fashioned way. Thus the Freudian proves that all thoughts are merely due to complexes except the thoughts which constitute this proof itself. The Marxist proves that all thoughts result from class conditioning – except the thought he is thinking while he says this. It is therefore always impossible to begin with any other data whatever and from them to find out whether thought is valid. You must do exactly the opposite – must begin by admitting the self-evidence of logical thought and then believe all other things only in so far as they agree with that. The validity of thought is central: all other things have to be fitted in round it as best they can.

Some Naturalists whom I have met attempt to escape by saying that there *is* no ground for believing our thoughts to be valid and that this does not worry them in the least. 'We find that they work', it is said, 'and we admit that we cannot argue from this that they give us a true account of any external reality. But we don't mind. We are not interested in truth. Our habits of thought seem to enable humanity to keep alive and that is all we care about'. One is tempted to reply that every free man wants truth as well as life: that a [31] mere life-addict is no more respectable than a cocaine addict. But opinions may differ on that point. The real answer is that unless the Naturalists put forward Naturalism as a true theory, we have of course no dispute with them. You can argue with a man who says, 'Rice is unwholesome': but you neither can nor need argue with a man who says, 'Rice is unwholesome, but I'm not saying this is true'. I feel also that this surrender of the claim to truth has all the air of an expedient adopted at the last moment. If the Naturalists do not claim to know any truths, ought they not to have warned us rather earlier of the fact? For really from all the books they have written, in which the behaviour of the remotest nebula, the shyest photon and the most prehistoric man are described, one would have got the idea that they were claiming to give a true account of real things. The fact surely is that they nearly always are claiming to do so. The claim is surrendered only when the question discussed in this chapter is pressed; and when the crisis is over the claim is tacitly resumed.

Appendix B

Elisabeth Anscombe's "Reply to Lewis" (1948)

From *The Collected Philosophical Papers of G. E. M. Anscombe*, Vol. II, *Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Mind* (Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1981), pp. 224-232; first published in *The Socratic Digest* Nr. 4 (1948), pp. 7-15. Page numbers from the 1981 edition and one *sic* have been added in square brackets. Footnotes are by the author.

This is the last piece in the book's third section, "Causality and Time". It is also the last piece of the book, which contains twenty-one pieces in all. In the Introduction (vii-x), Anscombe explains that her "first strenuous interest in philosophy was in the topic of causality", and further, that "the other central philosophical topic which I got hooked on without even realizing that it was philosophy, was perception" (vii, viii). Of this 3½-page Introduction, more than a third is about the Reply to Lewis and it concludes the introduction as the Reply concludes the volume. It may serve as an introduction here too:

[ix] This volume contains the earliest purely philosophical writing on my part which was published: the criticism of C. S. Lewis' argument for 'the self-refutation of the Naturalist' in the first edition of his book, *Miracles*, chapter III. Those who want to see what the argument was, without relying on my criticism for it, should take care to get hold of the first edition (1947). The version of that chapter which is most easily available is the second edition, which came out as a Fontana paperback in 1960. The chapter, which in 1947 had the title "The Self-Contradiction of the Naturalist", was rewritten and is now called "The Cardinal Difficulty of the Naturalist" [*sic*]. The last five pages of the old chapter have been replaced by ten pages of the new, though a quotation from J. B. S. Haldane is common to both. Internal evidence shows that at least some of the rewriting was done after the first Sputnik and even after the hot dry summer of 1959. But I should judge that he thought rather hard about the matter in the interval. The rewritten version is much less slick and avoids some of the mistakes of the earlier one: it is much more of a serious investigation. He distinguishes between 'the Cause-Effect *because*' and 'the Ground-Consequent *because*', where before he had simply spoken of 'irrational causes'. If what we think at the end of our reasoning is to be true, the correct answer to "Why do you think that?" must use the latter *because*. On the other hand, every event in Nature must be connected with previous events in the Cause-and-Effect relation. ... "Unfortunately the two systems are wholly distinct". ... And "even if grounds do exist what exactly have they got to do with the actual occurrence of the belief as a psychological event?"

These thoughts lead him to suggest that being a cause and being a proof must coincide – but he finds strong objections to this. (He obviously had imbibed some sort of universal-law determinism about causes.) After some consideration he reverts to the (unexamined) idea he used in the first edition, of 'full explanation': "Anything which professes to explain our reasoning fully without introducing an act of knowing, thus solely determined by what is known, is really a theory that there is no reasoning. But this, as it seems to me, is what Naturalism is bound to do." The remaining four and a half pages are devoted to an elaboration of this. Unluckily he doesn't explore this idea [x] of 'an act of knowing solely determined by what is known', which is obviously crucial.

Rereading the argument of the first edition and my criticism of it, it seems to me that they are just. At the same time, I find them lacking in any recognition of the depth of the problem. I don't think Lewis' first version itself gave one much impression of that. The argument of the second edition has much to criticize in it, but it certainly does correspond more to the actual depth and difficulty of the questions being discussed. I think we haven't yet an answer to the question I have quoted from him: "What is the connection between grounds and the actual occurrence of the belief?"

The fact that Lewis rewrote that chapter, and rewrote it so that it now has these qualities, shows his honesty and seriousness. The meeting of the Socratic Club at which I read my paper has been described by several of his friends as a horrible and shocking experience which upset him very much. Neither Dr Havard (who had Lewis and me to dinner a few weeks later) nor Professor Jack Bennett remembered any such feelings on Lewis' part. The paper that I read is as printed here. My own recollection is that it was an occasion of sober discussion of certain quite definite criticisms, which Lewis' rethinking and rewriting showed he thought were accurate. I am inclined to construe the odd accounts of the matter by some of his friends – who seem not to have been interested in the actual arguments or the subject-matter – as an interesting example of the phenomenon called "projection".

A Reply to Mr C. S. Lewis's Argument¹ that "Naturalism" is Self-Refuting²

I want to discuss your argument that what you call "naturalism" is self-refuting because it is inconsistent with a belief in the validity of reason. With this argument you propose to destroy 'naturalism' and hence remove the determinist objection to miracles.

For my purpose it is not necessary to go into your description of 'naturalism' or your claim that one must either believe it or be a 'Supernaturalist' – i.e. believe in God. For you say that 'naturalism' includes the idea that human thought can be fully explained as the product of natural (i.e. non-rational) causes, and it is this idea which you maintain is self-contradictory because it impugns the validity of reason, and therefore necessarily of any thinking by which it itself is reached.

What I shall discuss, therefore, is this argument: the hypothesis that human thought can be fully explained as the product of non-rational causes is inconsistent with a belief in the validity of reason.

irrational and non-rational

You state it as a rule that "no thought is valid if it can be fully explained as the result of irrational causes", and you give examples to show that we all universally apply this rule: we do not attend to the belief of a man with delirium tremens that the house is full of rats and snakes; we are less impressed by a man's gloomy views if we know he is suffering from a bad liver attack; the disruptive power of Marxism and Freudianism against traditional beliefs has lain in their claim to expose irrational causes for them.

¹ A short version of Lewis' argument can be found in his paper "Religion without Dogma" on pp. 87–8 of this issue of the *Socratic Digest* which is also commented on by Prof. H. H. Price in his reply to that paper, section 4, p. 98. The argument in full is in "Miracles", Chapter III of the first edition.

² I wish to acknowledge that I was very greatly helped in writing this paper by discussing it with Mr Y. Smythies: naturally, he is not responsible for its faults.

About the first two examples I should like to say that it is only because we already know that men with delirium tremens see things that are not there, and that men with liver attacks take gloomier views of the situation than they would normally take, or than is reasonable, that we dismiss a man's belief by ascribing it to delirium tremens or to a liver attack when we know he has one of these complaints.

What sort of thing would one normally call "irrational causes" for human thoughts? If one is asked this, one immediately thinks of such things as passion, self-interest, wishing only to see the agreeable or disagreeable, [225] obstinate and prejudicial adherence to the views of a party or school with which one is connected, and so on. Suppose one mentions such things, and then someone says: "There are also tumours on the brain tuberculosis, jaundice, arthritis and similar things", one would rightly object that these do not belong in the same list as the others. They are not "irrational causes", they are conditions which we know to go with irrational beliefs or attitudes with sufficient regularity for us to call them their causes.

You speak of "irrational causes", and by that you seem to mean "any cause that is not something rational". "Something rational" you explain by example: "such as [you say] argument from observed facts". You contrast the following sentences: (1) "He thinks that dog dangerous because he has often seen it muzzled and he has noticed that messengers always try to avoid going to that house;" (2) "He thinks that dog dangerous because it is black and ever since he was bitten by a black dog in childhood he has always been afraid of black dogs."

Both sentences [you say] explain *why* the man thinks as he does. But the one explanation substantiates the value of his thought and the other discredits it. The difference is that in the first instance the man's belief is caused by something rational (by argument from observed facts) while in the other it is caused by something irrational (association of ideas).

I am going to argue that your whole thesis is only specious because of the ambiguity of the words "why", "because" and "explanation". That ambiguity is illustrated here. The case of the man who is frightened by black dogs is unclear. Imagine the two following possibilities: (1) He says "That dog's dangerous." He is asked, "How do you know?" He says, "It's black: I was once bitten by a black dog." to this we reply: "That's not a good ground. We know enough about dogs to know that." (2) He says: "that dog's dangerous." He is asked, "How do you know?" But to this he gives no answer; he shakes his head, trembles and says, "It's dangerous." Then either he, or someone else, says that he behaves like this because he was once bitten by a black dog. Then we can know that we need not pay attention to his belief; it already appeared groundless, from the fact that he could give no grounds; but now we are satisfied it is groundless because we understand it as the expression of a fear produced by circumstances which we know to give no good grounds for fear. It is here quite natural to speak of "irrational causes".

Similarly it is true that the Marxists and the Freudians claim to expose irrational causes for various traditional beliefs. The Freudian says that my belief in God is a projection of my infantile attitude towards my father. The Marxist says that many of my beliefs and reasonings arise from my considering things important that I should not consider important if I were not bourgeois, and neglecting other things which I should not neglect if I were not bourgeois; and that the whole point and significance of certain kinds of thinking is simply – by the very pretence

of detachment that they make – to draw people away from relating their thoughts to the class-struggle.

[226] But by your equation of “irrational cause” with “non-rational cause”, you are led to imagine that if the naturalist hypothesis (that all human behaviour, including thought, could be accounted for by scientific causal laws) were true, human thought would all have been explained away as invalid; that if human beings could be shown to act according to such laws, their case would have been shown to be universally like the particular case of the man who is actuated by “irrational causes” and whose beliefs are groundless. This seems to me to be a mistake founded on various confusions you commit about the concepts of “reason”, “cause” and “explanation”; and I hope by showing what the confusions are, to show that it *is* a mistake.

the validity of thought

First, I want to examine your remark that we must believe in the validity of reason, and that we can see when a hypothesis is inconsistent with a belief in the validity of reason, and refute it by the consideration that it is inconsistent with that belief.

You can talk about the validity of a *piece* of reasoning, and sometimes about the validity of a *kind* of reasoning; but if you say you believe in the validity of reasoning itself, what do you mean? Isn't this question about the validity of reasoning a question about the validity of *valid* reasoning? Suppose that you are asked to explain “valid”, how will you do it? The most obvious way would be to show examples of valid and invalid reasoning, to make the objections which, in the examples of invalid reasoning, show that the conclusion does not follow from the premises; in the cases of valid reasoning, to elucidate the form of the argument: if the piece of reasoning under consideration is elliptical, to add the statements which are required to enforce the conclusion. Whether you would adopt this method or some other (though I do not know of any other), I suppose you think it *somehow* possible to explain to yourself or someone else what “valid” means, what the distinction between “valid” and “invalid” is? Now if the naturalistic hypothesis (that human thought is the product of a chain of natural causes) is proposed to you, you say: “But if this were so, it would destroy the distinction between valid and invalid reasoning.” But how? Would it imply that you could no longer give the explanation you gave, point to and explain the examples, say which arguments proposed to you are valid and which invalid in just the same way as you did before the naturalistic hypothesis was supposed? “But,” you may say, “though I should of course know which arguments to *call* valid, or which I should have *called* valid, I should now feel any confidence that they were *really* valid.” But what do you mean by “really valid”? What meaning of “valid” has been taken away from you by the naturalistic hypothesis? What *can* you mean by “valid” beyond what would be indicated by the explanation you would give for distinguishing between valid and invalid, and what in the naturalistic hypothesis prevents that explanation from being given and from meaning what it does?

You say that on this hypothesis there would be no difference between the conclusions of the finest scientific reasoning and the thoughts a man has because a bit of bone is pressing on his brain. In one way, this is true. [227] Suppose that the kind of account which the “naturalist” imagines, were actually given in the two cases. We should have two accounts of processes in the human organism. “Valid”, “true”, “false” would not come into either of the accounts. That shows, you say,

that the conclusions of the scientist would be just as irrational as those of the other man. But that does not follow at all. Whether his conclusions are rational or irrational is settled by considering the chain of reasoning that he gives and whether his conclusions follow from it. When we are giving a causal account of this thought, e.g. an account of the physiological processes which issue in the utterance of his reasoning, we are not considering his utterances from the point of view of evidence, reasoning, valid argument, truth, at all; we are considering them merely as events. Just *because* that is how we are considering them, our description has in itself no bearing on the question of “valid”, “invalid”, “rational”, “irrational”, and so on.

causes, reasons, and reasonings

Given the scientific explanation of human thought and action which the naturalist hypothesis asserts to be possible, we could, if we had the data that the explanation required, predict what any man was going to say, and what conclusions he was going to form. That would not mean that there was no sense in calling what he did say true or false, rational or irrational.

But [you say] this imagined explanation would show that what we said was not caused by reason but by non-rational processes. We may give arguments, but, as everything we say will be fully explained by non-rational causes, (1) the idea that conclusions are derived from premises will be an illusion (hence I say that the explanation impugns the validity of reason) and (2) the idea that we think what we do because of reasoning, i.e. because we have reasoned, will be an illusion. Every thought will have been produced by a non-rational chain of causes and therefore not by such rational causes as observation and argument. So no thought will be worth anything.

I want to say that such an argument as this is based on a confusion between the concepts of cause and reason, which arises because of the ambiguity of such expressions as “because” and “explanation”.

(1) If I said: “You think this conclusion follows from these premisses, but in fact the assertion of it is a physical event with physical causes just like any other physical event,” would it not be clear that I was imagining the ground of a conclusion to be a kind of cause of it? Otherwise there would be no incompatibility: “this conclusion follows from these premisses” would be in no way contradicted by “the assertion of this conclusion is a physical event with physical causes like any other physical event.” Even though all human activity, including the production of opinions and arguments, were explained naturalistically, that could have no bearing on ‘the validity of reason’ – i.e. on the question whether a piece of reasoning were valid or not. Here I am speaking of ‘reason’ in a non-psychological sense, in which ‘a reason’ is what proves a conclusion. If we have before us a piece of writing which argues for an opinion, we can discuss the question: “Is this good [228] reasoning?” without concerning ourselves with the circumstances of its production at all.

(2) But you may say that you do not wish to call a reason – in this non-psychological sense – the cause of its conclusion; you may agree that the naturalistic hypothesis could not impugn ‘the validity of reason’ in this sense, but say that it makes reason an idea which we cannot attain; that it does impugn the validity of all *actual* human reasonings. For granted that the logical derivation of a conclusion from its premises could not be affected by any hypothesis, yet if *our* reasonings are to be valid *we* must derive the conclusions from the premises, in

actual fact.³ This introduces a psychological application of the concept of “reason” which is used if we ask the following questions about, e.g., a piece of writing that we are examining: “Granted that this is a piece of reasoning, did the man who wrote it actually *reason*? Was he really persuaded by this reasoning or by something else? Or – another possibility – did he really understand and mean this argument? Or did he perhaps write it down quite mechanically? Here is a statement (which is even in fact correct), but did the man who wrote it himself assert it because of the good grounds which do exist for asserting it?” If we can answer “yes” to such questions as these we call the opinions in question “rational” or the man “rational” for holding them. And if we know that a man’s opinions are not rational in this sense, we regard it as accidental if in fact they are worth attending to or true; we shall not expect to find them worth attending to, and if it is a question of information to be accepted on his word, we shall not accept it.

You argue that the naturalist hypothesis about human thinking implies that no human thinking is rational in this sense. For if a man produces what purports to be the conclusion of an argument, in order that what he says should be rational he must say it *because* he has reasoned; but the naturalist hypothesis says that he says it *because* of certain natural causes; and if these causes *fully* explain his utterance, if the chain of causes is complete, there is no room for the operation of such a cause as the man’s own reasoning. So someone might say “If I claimed to be able to kill a man by an act of will, and he died, but his death was fully explained by the fact that someone who had sworn to murder him shot him through the heart, that would demolish my claim to have killed him by an act of will.”

the varieties of explanation

Your idea appears to be that ‘*the explanation*’ is everywhere the same one definite requirement: as if there were a fixed place for ‘*the explanation*’ so that we can know, when it is filled, that, if it has been correctly filled, the whole subject of ‘explaining this fact’ has been closed. We understand the requirement antecedently to any knowledge of the kind of investigation that might be made, and, once we see that the requirement has been satisfied, no further question can be asked.

But the concept of ‘explanation’ has very varied applications, and the expression “full explanation” has reference only to the type of explanation [229] that is in question. I may, for example, ask a man to explain to me his reasons for thinking something. He gives me an explanation. I may say: “That’s not a full explanation; there must be more to it than that – for it explains, let us say, why you take a naturalistic view but not why your view is a physical or physiological naturalism; the arguments you have given are consistent with a psychological naturalism: tell me why you reject that.” Now if I ask for this sort of investigation I am not making a *causal* enquiry at all: I am asking for grounds, not causes; and you can only have imagined that it was appropriate to speak of “causes” because the word “because” is used. Giving one’s reasons for thinking something is like giving one’s motives for doing something. You might ask me: “why did you half-turn towards the door?” and I explain that I thought I saw a friend coming in, and then realized it was someone else. This may be the explanation although I did not at the time *say* to myself “Hello! There’s so-and-so; I’ll go and speak to him; oh

³ I think this is the argument of Mr Lewis’ reply to me.

no, it's someone else." So when I give the explanation it is not by way of observing two events and the causal relation between them.

The naturalistic hypothesis is that causal laws could be discovered which could be successfully applied to all human behaviour, including thought. If such laws were discovered they would not show that a man's reasons were not his reasons; for a man who is explaining his reasons is not giving a causal account at all. "Causes", in the scientific sense in which this word is used when we speak of causal laws, is to be explained in terms of observed regularities: but the declaration of one's reasons or motives is not founded on observation of regularities. 'Reasons' and 'motives' are what is *elicited* from someone whom we ask to explain himself. Of course we may doubt that a man has told, or even made clear to himself, his real reasons and motives; but what we are asking for if we say so is a more searching consideration, not an investigation into such a question as: "Is this really an instance of the causal law which I have applied to it?" – and that is true even though, as is possible, we doubt him on grounds of empirical generalizations which we have made about people's motives and reasons for the action or opinion in question. Such generalizations are possible, and hence one can imagine a psychological naturalism which believes in the possibility of a complete scientific system of psychological causal laws of human behaviour. It is important to realize that such a notion of psychological causality (which would arise from observing regularities in people's motives and mental processes) should be distinguished from the use of "because" in the *expression* of motives and mental processes.

It appears to me that if a man has reasons, and they are good reasons, and they are genuinely his reasons, for thinking something – then his thought is rational, whatever causal statements we make about him. Even though he give good reasons, however, we may detect in him such passions or such motives of self-interest in saying what he does that we say that it is not really "for these reasons" that he says it, and regard the reasons as a façade that he puts up to obscure his 'real reasons': these 'real reasons' being the kind of [230] thing that I admitted as 'irrational causes'. And we rightly suspect and scrutinize carefully the reasoning that he offers. Or we may think him so dominated by 'irrational causes' that it is not worthwhile to look at his reasoning at all: though the mere fact that he is actuated by these motives does not necessarily mean that he will not in fact be able to reason well.

one more case of ambiguity

So far I have only talked of a man's reasons in a sense in which: "He thinks so-and-so because of such-and-such a chain of reasoning" is in no way a causal statement. There is a kind of statement that I have not yet considered, which is in some sense causal. Suppose I ask someone why he believes something, and he begins to produce reasons, I may say: "Sorry, I didn't mean that – I know what reasons there are for believing as you do; what I meant to ask was what in actual fact, as a matter of history, led you to his opinion, what *caused* you to adopt it?" This is a quite intelligible question which anyone would know how to answer. It seems to me that you have not distinguished it, as it ought to be distinguished, from the question "what are your reasons?" – and that it is in virtue of his answer to the latter that a man or his opinions should be called rational, whatever his answer to the former. However, as your argument stands, it says that human thought is discredited unless his answer to the former question ("What, as a matter of history, led you to this belief?") states the *occurrence* of reasoning; and you also argue

that on the naturalist hypothesis an answer which does state the occurrence of reasoning cannot be true, because the naturalist hypothesis is that non-rational causes produce his opinions. I should also deny this part of your argument. For though it is natural to use the word "cause" here, the logic of "cause" as used here is different from its logic as used when we speak of causal laws. Suppose someone asks me for such a historical account of the mental processes which actually issued in my belief, and I give it to him. And suppose he then asks: "What reason have you for calling the thing that you mention in answer to this question the *causes* of your belief?" At first I would imagine that he was accusing me of self-deception, saying, "Look into it more thoroughly and you will realize that you have not given a truthful account." But suppose he makes it clear that he is not suggesting anything of this kind; he does not doubt my account of my mental processes at all; but, given that they occurred just as I have related them, and that afterwards I held the opinion which I say resulted from them, he asks why I say that it did result from them, that they did produce it? Would this not be an extraordinarily odd question? It makes it seem as if one made here a causal statement analogous to scientific causal statement, which would be justified by – roughly – appeal to observed regularities; but here, though it is natural, given the kind of question, "What actually led you to this?" to speak of a "cause", yet the sense of "cause" as used here is not to be explained by reference to observed regularities. That is sufficient to show that this is one more case of the great ambiguity of "explanation", "why", "because", and "cause" itself. And therefore the discovery of scientific causal laws could not [231] demonstrate the falsity of such assertions as "I thought so-and-so as a *result* of such-and-such consideration".

concluding remarks

I do not think that there is sufficiently good reason for maintaining the "naturalist" hypothesis about human behaviour and thought. But someone who does maintain it cannot be refuted as you try to refute him, by saying that it is inconsistent to maintain it and to believe that human reasoning is valid and that human reasoning sometimes produces human opinion.

A causal explanation of a man's thought only reflects on its validity as an indication, if we know that opinions caused in that way are always or usually unreasonable.

DISCUSSION

In his reply Mr C. S. Lewis agreed that the words "cause" and "ground" were far from synonymous but said that the recognition of a ground could be the cause of assent, and that assent was only rational when such was its cause. He denied that such words as "recognition" and "perception" could be properly used of a mental act among whose causes the thing perceived or recognized was not one.

Miss Anscombe said that Mr Lewis had misunderstood her and thus the first part of the discussion was confined to the two speakers who attempted to clarify their positions and their differences. Miss Anscombe said that Mr Lewis was still not distinguishing between "having reasons" and "having reasoned" in the causal sense. Mr Lewis understood the speaker to be making a tetrachotomy thus: (1) logical reasons; (2) having reasons (i.e. psychological); (3) historical causes; (4) scientific causes or observed regularities. The main point in his reply was that an observed regularity was only the symptom of a cause, and not the cause itself, and in reply to an interruption by the Secretary he referred to his notion of cause as

“magical”. An open discussion followed, in which some members tried to show Miss Anscombe that there was a connection between ground and cause, while others contended against the President [Lewis] that the test for the validity of reason could never in any event be such a thing as the state of the blood stream. The President finally admitted that the word “valid” was an unfortunate one. From the discussion in general it appeared that Mr Lewis would have to turn his argument into a rigorous analytic one, if his notion of “validity” as the effect of causes were to stand the test of all the questions put to him.

NOTE BY C. S. LEWIS

I admit that *valid* was a bad word for what I meant; *veridical* (or *verific* or *veriferous*) would have been better. I also admit that the cause and effect relation between events and the ground and consequent relation between propositions are distinct. Since English uses the word *because* of both, let us [231] here use *Because CE* for the cause and effect relation (“This doll always falls on its feet *because CE* its feet are weighted”) and *Because GC* for the ground and consequent relation (“A equals C *because GC* they both equal B”). But the sharper this distinction becomes the more my difficulty increases. If an argument is to be *verific* the conclusion must be related to the premisses as consequent to ground, i.e. the conclusion is there *because GC* certain other propositions are true. On the other hand, our thinking the conclusion is an event and must be related to previous events as effect to cause, i.e. this act of thinking must occur *because CE* previous events have occurred. It would seem, therefore, that we never think the conclusion *because GC* it is the consequent of its grounds but only *because CE* certain previous events have happened. If so, it does not seem that the *GC* sequence makes us more likely to think the true conclusion than not. And this is very much what I meant by the difficulty in Naturalism.

Appendix C

Miracles revised (1960):

A survey of changes from *irrational* to *non-rational*

[8*27] = chapter's paragraph 8, page 27 in the specified edition. A vertical line has been added in the case of chapter III to indicate that the passages on the left are not directly comparable to those on the right.

First edition

Geoffrey Bles 1947

CHAPTER III

The Self-Contradiction of the Naturalist

[8*27] ...in the first instance the man's belief is caused by something rational (by argument from observed facts) while in the other it is caused by something **irrational** (association of ideas).

[9*27] We may in fact state it as a rule that *no thought is valid if it can be fully explained as the result of irrational causes.*

[9*27] Because he [the Marxist] thinks that my thoughts result from an **irrational** cause he therefore discounts them.

[10*28] Each particular thought is valueless if it is the result of **irrational** causes. Obviously, then, the whole process of human thought what we call Reason is equally valueless if it is the result of **irrational** causes. Hence every theory of the universe which makes the human mind a result of **irrational** causes is inadmissible, for it would be a proof that there are no such things as proofs. Which is nonsense.

[11*28] ...the Total System is not supposed to be rational. All thoughts whatever are therefore the results of **irrational** causes, and nothing more than that. The finest piece of scientific reasoning is caused in just the same **irrational** way as the thoughts a man has because a bit of bone is pressing on his brain.

[11*28] The Naturalist cannot condemn other people's thoughts because they have **irrational** causes and continue to believe his own which have (if Naturalism is true) equally **irrational** causes.

Revised edition

Fontana Books 1960

CHAPTER III

The Cardinal Difficulty of Naturalism

The revised chapter's first six paragraphs were retained without any changes from the first edition; in this section the word *irrational* does not appear. In the remaining ten paragraphs of the original chapter *irrational* was used twelve times. This section was re-written and considerably expanded for the new edition – from ten paragraphs or 1,769 words to twenty-five paragraphs or 3,743 words. In the re-written section *irrational* does not appear, but there are six instances of either *non-rational* or *not rational*. Thus while these latter expressions were absent from chapter 3 in the first edition, *irrational* is absent from this chapter in the revised edition.

[22*22] Once, then, our thoughts were **not rational**.

[22*23] Such a perfection [by “natural selection”] of the **non-rational** responses, far from amounting to their conversion into valid inferences, might be conceived as a different method of achieving survival – an alternative to reason.

[23*23] It might be held that this, in the course of millennia, could conjure the mental behaviour we call reason [...] out of a mental behaviour which was originally **not rational**.

[29*26-27] The human mind in the act of knowing ... is set free, in the measure required, from the huge nexus of **non-rational** causation...

[31*27] ...the general and for the most part **non-rational** working of the whole interlocked system.

[12*28] The trouble about atoms is not that they are material (whatever that may mean), but that they are, presumably, **irrational**. Or even if they were rational they do not produce my beliefs by honestly arguing with me [...]. I am still subject to brute force: my beliefs have **irrational** causes.

[31*28] ...an act of insight, a knowledge sufficiently free from **non-rational** causation to be determined (positively) only by the truth it knows.

CHAPTER IV
Nature and Supernature

CHAPTER IV
Nature and Supernature

In this chapter, *irrational* from the old edition was consistently changed to *non-rational* in the new. The one exception is the first sentence, where *irrational* disappeared altogether as the sentence was rewritten and expanded; see first case below. Other changes in this chapter are listed in Appendix D.

[1*33] If our argument has been sound, rational thought or Reason is not interlocked with the great interlocking system of **irrational** events which we call Nature.

[1*29] If our argument has been sound, acts of reasoning are not interlocked with the total interlocking system of Nature as all its other items are interlocked with one another. They are connected with it in a different way; as the understanding of a machine is certainly connected with the machine but not in the way the parts of the machine are connected with each other. The knowledge of a thing is not one of the thing's parts. In this sense something beyond Nature operates whenever we reason.

[1*33] ...the frontier coming [...] between Reason and the whole mass of **irrational** events whether physical or psychological.

[1*29] ...the frontier coming [...] between Reason and the whole mass of **non-rational** events whether physical or psychological.

[2*34] ...a train of thought loses all rational credentials as soon as it can be shown to be wholly the result of **irrational** causes.

[2*30] ...a train of thought loses all rational credentials as soon as it can be shown to be wholly the result of **non-rational** causes.

[5*35] For it is not dependence simply but dependence on the **irrational** which undermines the credentials of thought.

[5*31] for it is not dependence simply but dependence on the **non-rational** which undermines the credentials of thought.

[11*39] But unfortunately its own thoughts [...] would be the product of **irrational** causes and therefore [...] have no validity. This cosmic mind would be, just as much as our own minds, the product of mindless Nature.

[11*34] But unfortunately its own thoughts [...] would be the product of **non-rational** causes and therefore [...] have no validity. This cosmic mind would be, just as much as our own minds, the product of mindless Nature.

No changes from *irrational* to *non-rational* were made in the rest of the book. The following passages are all the remaining instances of either word in the book and are identical in the two editions.
After the paragraph number and asterisk, page numbers are preceded by B for Bles and F for Fontana.

CHAPTER V *A Further Difficulty in Naturalism*

[2*B44/F38-39] If we cannot prove either axiom, that is not because they are **irrational** but because they are self-evident...

[3*B44/F39] ...if they can be fully accounted for by some non-moral and **non-rational** cause. [...] No one (in real life) pays attention to any moral judgment which can be shown to spring from non-moral and **non-rational** causes.

[4*B44/F39] If the fact that men have such ideas as *ought* and *ought not* at all can be fully explained by **irrational** and non-moral causes...

[7*B46/F41] Do they remember [...] that [...] the words “ought” and “better” must, on their own showing, refer to an **irrationally** conditioned impulse which cannot be true or false any more than a vomit or a yawn?

CHAPTER X “*Horrid Red Things*”

[3*B91/F79] No doubt we are unspeakably different from him; to that extent all man-like images are false. But those images of shapeless mists and **irrational** forces [...] must be very more so.

CHAPTER XIII *On Probability*

[13*B125-126/F108] I think the belief has three causes, two of which are **irrational**. [...] Both these causes are **irrational**.

[16*B127/F109] ...if our own deepest convictions are merely the bye-products of an **irrational** process...

CHAPTER XIV *The Grand Miracle*

[30*B152/F130] ...then, as we have seen, all thoughts would be equally nonsensical, for all would have **irrational** causes.

Appendix D

Miracles revised (1960): A survey of further changes

7*B37/F33 = chapter's paragraph 7, Bles (first) edition page 37, Fontana (revised) edition page 33. Changes in orthography and corrections of mere typos are mostly disregarded.

CHAPTER II *The Naturalist and the Supernaturalist*

locations	First edition	Revised edition
12*B21/F14	spasmodic interlockings	anomalous interlockings

CHAPTER IV *Nature and Supernature*

– *changes in capitals:*

1*B33/F29	Reason	reason
2*B33-34/F29-30	Rational (3x)	rational
4*B34/F30	a Reason	reason
7*B37/F32	reason	Reason
8*B37/F33	Miracles	miracles
8*B37-8/F33	Man (3x)	man
15*B42/F37	He is the creator	He is the Creator
15*B42/F37	...are made to exist before Creation	...are made to exist before creation

– *other changes:*

5*B35-6/F31	One step in an argument depends on the previous step, and is all the better for doing so.	<i>sentence deleted before “One man’s reason has been led...”</i>
9*B38/F34	infinite	indefinite

CHAPTER V *A Further Difficulty in Naturalism*

3*B44/F39	Moral Judgments	moral judgments
7*B46/F40	...Wells has spent a long life...	...Wells spent a long life...

CHAPTER VII *A Chapter of Red Herrings*

10*B60/F54	...empty, or if it contained nothing but...	...empty, if it contained nothing but...
10*B61/F54	...that God could be so concerned...	...that God should be so concerned...
10*B61/F54	It seems that we are hard to please. We treat God as the police treat a man when he is arrested; whatever He does will be used in evidence against Him.	We treat God as the policeman in the story treated the suspect; whatever he does “will be used in evidence against him.”

CHAPTER VIII *Miracle and the Laws of Nature*

4*B69/F61	Laws of Nature	laws of Nature
4*B69/F61	And therefore, shall we conclude...	And therefore, we shall conclude...

11*B70/F61 ...which he had not taken into account ...which he has not taken into account
9*74/F65 ...revelations of the total harmony... ...revelations of that total harmony...

CHAPTER IX *A Chapter not strictly Necessary*

motto* B77/F67 We saw the giants, the sons of Anak; And we saw the giants, the sons of
and we were in our own sight as Anak; which come of the giants: and
grasshoppers... we were in our own sight as
grasshoppers...

CHAPTER X "*Horrid Red Things*"

1*B83/F72 such interferences and invasions such interference and invasions

CHAPTER XI *Christianity and "Religion"*

6*B103/F89 ...as a cube combines six squares... ...as a cube contains six squares...
6*B103/F89 ...Flatlanders could comprehend a ...Flatlanders would comprehend a
cube cube

CHAPTER XIII *On Probability*

6*B123/F105-6 Miracle (2x) miracle

CHAPTER XIV *The Grand Miracle*

4*B133/F114 ...a wholly supernatural entity... ...a more than natural activity (the act
of reasoning) and therefore
presumably a more than natural
agent...
5*B135/F115 ...of the Nature He had created ...of the Nature He has created
9*B137/F118 ...the only dying god who... ...the only dying God who...
29*B151/F129 ...far beyond my intention ...far beyond our power
31*B153/F131 Spirit by dominating Nature... spirit by dominating Nature...
35*B157/F134 ...defeat Death or redeem it ...defeat death or redeem it

CHAPTER XV *Miracles of the Old Creation*

[5-12*B163-7/F139-43] Miracle(s) (5x) miracle(s)
[13*B168/F144] ...stimulate Natural functions... ...simulate Natural functions...
[16*B170/F145] miracles (3x) Miracles

CHAPTER XVI *Miracles of the New Creation*

7-8*B175-6/F150-1 boiled fish (2x) broiled fish

14, 24*B179, 187/F153, 160 ...new Nature... old Nature... (2x) ...New Nature... Old Nature...

EPILOGUE

4*B200/F170 miracle Miracle

APPENDIX A

3*B204/F174 Supernatural supernatural

APPENDIX B

11*B211/F181 ...not conscious along its whole length at once – only of each point... ...not conscious along the whole length at once – only on each point...

15* B213/F182 ...as a sequence of prayer and answer... ...as a sequence and prayer and answer

18*B214/F183 ...at ten o'clock at ten a.m.

TWO FURTHER NOTES ON THE TEXT OF *MIRACLES*:

1. Chapter III (revised ed.), par. 27, Fontana p. 26, “...that towering speculation, discovered from practice”: *discovered* might be a typo for *divorced*. No manuscripts have been preserved, so that no certainty is available here. A quotation in Richard Purtill’s *C. S. Lewis’s Case for the Christian Faith* (1985), p. 26, from the 1960 U.S. edition of *Miracles* actually has *divorced*, not *discovered*.
2. Chapter VII, par. 16, Fontana p. 57, “...if the vastness of Nature ever threatens to overcrow our spirits...”: Some editions have *overcrowd* for *overcrow*.

Appendix E

Miracles III, original and revised: parallel excerpts

ORIGINAL, 1947

‘The Self-Contradiction
of the Naturalist’

REVISED, 1960

‘The Cardinal Difficulty
of Naturalism’

The first three excerpts cover the chapter’s first six paragraphs, which is the section that was retained without changes in the revised edition. The rest of the chapter was rewritten and expanded, and is therefore excerpted in separate columns for the two editions.

[23 | 16] If Naturalism is true, every finite thing or event must be (in principle) explicable in terms of the Total System. ... If any one thing exists which is of such a kind that we see in advance the impossibility of ever giving it *that kind* of explanation, then Naturalism would be in ruins.

[25-26 | 18] It is clear that everything we know, beyond our own immediate sensations, is inferred from those sensations. ... All possible knowledge, then, depends on the validity of reasoning.

[26 | 18-19] A theory which explained everything else in the whole universe but which made it impossible to believe that our thinking was valid, would be utterly out of court. ... It would have destroyed its own credentials. It would be ... a proof that there are no such things as proofs – which is nonsense.

first edition continued ↓

[26] We must believe in the validity of rational thought, and we must not believe in anything inconsistent with its validity. But we can believe in the validity of thought only under certain conditions.

[27] We may in fact state as a rule that *no thought is valid if it can be fully explained as the result of irrational causes.*

[28] Each particular thought is valueless if it is the result of irrational causes. Obviously, then, the whole process of human thought, what we call Reason, is equally valueless if it is the result of irrational causes. ... [In Naturalism] the mind, like every other particular thing or event, is supposed to be simply the product of the Total System. ... And the Total System is not supposed to be rational. All thoughts whatever are therefore the results of irrational causes, and nothing more than that. ... The Naturalist cannot ... (if Naturalism is true) ... continue to believe his own [thoughts].

[30] Any argument whatever which attempts to prove or disprove the validity of thought ... make[s] a tacit, and illegitimate, excep-

↓ revised edition continued

[19] Naturalism ... discredits our processes of reasoning or at least reduces their credit to such a humble level that it can no longer support Naturalism itself.

[20] If what we think at the end of our reasoning is to be true, the correct answer to the question, “Why do you think this?” must begin with the Ground-Consequent *because*. On the other hand, every event in Nature must be connected with previous events in the Cause and Effect relation. ... It looks therefore, as if, in order for a train of thought to have any value, these two systems of connection must apply simultaneously to the same series of mental acts. ... But unfortunately the two systems are wholly distinct. ... How could such a trifle as lack of logical grounds prevent the belief’s occurrence or how could the existence of grounds promote it?

[21] One thought can cause another not by *being*, but by being *seen to be*, a ground for it. ... Acts of thinking are no doubt events; but they are a very special sort of events. They are “about” something other than themselves and can be true or false. ... What

tion in favour of the bit of thought you are doing at that moment. It has to be left outside the discussion and simply believed in, in the simple old-fashioned way. ... It is ... always impossible to begin with any other data whatever and from them to find out whether thought is valid. ... The validity of thought is central: all other things have to be fitted in round it as best they can.

from [one] point of view is the psychological transition from thought A to thought B, at some particular moment in some particular mind, is from the thinker's point of view a perception of an implication (if A, then B). ... And we cannot possibly reject the second point of view as a subjective illusion without discrediting all human knowledge.

[22] The act of knowing has no doubt various conditions ... but its positive character must be determined by the truth it knows. ... That is what *knowing* means.

↓ *revised edition continues page-wide*

[22] Naturalism ... offers what professes to be a full account of our mental behaviour; but this account ... leaves no room for the acts of knowing or insight on which the whole value of our thinking, as a means to truth, depends.

[22] If there is nothing but Nature ... the type of mental behaviour we now call rational thinking or inference must ... have been "evolved" by natural selection.

[23] But it is not conceivable that any improvement of [biologically useful] responses could ever turn them into acts of insight, or even remotely tend to do so. ... It is not men with specially good eyes who know about light, but men who have studied the relevant sciences. In the same way our psychological responses to our environment ... could be indefinitely improved (from the biological point of view) without becoming anything more than responses.

[23-24] Besides natural selection there is ... experience. ... But ... the assumption that things which have been conjoined in the past will always be conjoined in the future is the guiding principle not of rational but of animal behaviour. Reason comes in precisely when you make the inference "Since always conjoined, therefore probably connected" and go on to attempt the discovery of the connection. ... Where this does not need to be done – that is, where the inference depends on an axiom – we do not appeal to past experience at all.

[25] The Naturalist ... gives ... a history of the evolution of reason which is inconsistent with the claims that he and I both have to make for inference as we actually practice it. For his history ... can only be an account, in Cause and Effect terms, of how people came to think the way they do. And this of course leaves in the air the quite different question of how they could possibly be justified in so thinking.

[25] If the value of our reasoning is in doubt, you cannot try to establish it by reasoning. If ... a proof that there are no proofs is nonsensical, so is a proof that there are proofs. Reason is our starting point. ... If by treating it as a mere phenomenon you put yourself outside it, there is then no way, except by begging the question, of getting inside again.

[26] [You may adopt the humble position that reason] is a behaviour evolved entirely as an aid to practice; ... [that] the old high pretensions of reason must be given up. ... But then, ... no more Naturalism. For of course Naturalism is a ... towering speculation ... as remote from practice, experience, and any conceivable verification as has ever been made since men began to use their reason speculatively.

[26-27] For [the Theist], reason – the reason of God – is older than Nature, and from it the orderliness of Nature, which alone enables him to know her, is derived. For him, the

human mind in the act of knowing ... is set free, in the measure required, from the huge nexus of non-rational causation; free from this to be determined by the truth known. And the preliminary processes within Nature which led up to this liberation, if there were any, were designed to do so.

[27-28] To call the act of knowing ... “supernatural” [is to say] that it “won’t fit in” ... When we try to fit these acts into the picture of Nature we fail. ... [T]he reason we ourselves are enjoying and exercising while we put it in ... claims, and must claim, to be an act of insight, a knowledge sufficiently free from non-rational causation to be determined (positively) only by the truth it knows. [The] imagined thinking which we put into the picture depends – because our whole idea of Nature depends – on the thinking we are actually doing, not *vice versa*. This is the prime reality, on which the attribution of reality to anything else rests. If it won’t fit into Nature, we can’t help it.

Appendix F

Miracles III, original and revised: parallel summaries

ORIGINAL, 1947

‘The Self-Contradiction
of the Naturalist’

REVISED, 1960

‘The Cardinal Difficulty
of Naturalism’

The first three paragraphs of this summary cover the chapter's first six paragraphs, which is the section that was retained without changes in the revised edition. The rest of the chapter was rewritten and expanded, and is therefore summarized in separate columns for the two editions.

Naturalism is the theory that the great interlocking event we call Nature is everything, or that everything is Nature. This theory will be in ruins as soon as anything is found to exist outside Nature. Are there any indications for the existence of things outside Nature?

An indication will be found if we attend to a self-contradiction which is inseparable from Naturalism. It is the kind of self-contradiction you get when you say that everyone is a liar, or that nothing is true. For that statement to be acceptable it must make an exception for itself, and thus deny its own truth.

Naturalism suffers from this difficulty because of its claim that Nature is everything. Attempts to overcome or to deny the problem only serve to confirm that something outside Nature must exist.

first edition continued ↓

Naturalism is guilty of this self-contradiction as it asserts that everything in the universe, being Nature, is the result of irrational causes. ‘Everything’ includes our thoughts, assertions and theories, so it must include the theory of Naturalism. Asserting Naturalism is to assert an irrational cause for your theory and thus to forfeit belief in it. Making an exception for Naturalism is to deny the truth of Naturalism.

The only way to escape from the self-contradiction of Naturalism is to abandon Naturalism. We must recognize that the validity of thought – and hence the possibility to develop theories – cannot be inferred from any other data. On the contrary, any other data can be ascertained only when we begin by admitting the self-evidence of logical thought.

This self-evidence means, in effect, independence from Nature: a sure sign that there exists something outside the whole interlocking system of Nature.

↓ *revised edition continued*

The difficulty arises because the Naturalist theory of the universe has only room for events that are related as Cause and Effect. This limitation is not compatible with the idea that Naturalism, or that anything, is true. Acts of thought or knowledge are events; but if they were events of the Cause-and-Effect kind, they would yield nothing we could maintain as truth or knowledge. The supposed truth of Naturalism, too, would be discredited.

Acts of valid thinking are events that are related not as Cause and Effect, but as Ground and Consequent. This means they are a kind of event that differs from what the Naturalist regards as the only kind there is. They are ‘about’ something other than themselves and can be true or false. The ‘being-about’ is a quality that must be obtained from a source outside the course of causal events. Whatever conditions are required for the act of knowing, its positive character must be determined, not by some event that happens to precede and cause it, but by the truth it knows. This truth known, this source of ‘aboutness’, must exist independently from what happens at any given time and place. Our thought appears to be in touch with this independent and self-existent reality.

To recognize this is to give up Naturalism. Attempts to avoid this usually serve to make it only harder to avoid, i.e. to make the existence of something outside Nature even more conspicuous. Thus, it will not work to explain our valid thought as a product of

* *evolution*, i.e. natural selection. The relation between response and stimulus is utterly different from that between knowledge and the truth known; and this applies to any responses, including psychological ones.

* *experience*. As long as we consider connections between events as matters of sheer probability (as if when I put two apples in an empty basket, then two more apples, and then no more apples, it would not be certain but only very probable that I had four apples in the basket), we have not progressed beyond animal behaviour. Reason comes in precisely when you make the inference 'since always conjoined, therefore probably connected' and go on to attempt the discovery of the connection.

* *practical distinctions between what works and what doesn't work*. If reason is humbled to this level, it will not serve for any towering speculations like Naturalism. It is therefore no improvement on the problem of self-contradiction.

Rational thought undeniably exists, and this might be seen as firm proof that rational thought can emerge from non-rational Nature. However, no cause-and-effect explanations for the existence of rational thought will ever explain how it can be valid: any attempt thus to explain the validity has to depend on this very validity. Proving that there are no proofs is nonsense, but proving that there *are* proofs is also nonsense.

Reason is therefore much more likely to be what the Theist holds it to be: not a product of Nature but a property of God – older than Nature, and the source of Nature's orderliness. To have certain knowledge is to see truths, and to see truths is, for humans, to be set free from the huge nexus of non-rational causation in a sufficient degree to be in touch (somehow, sometimes) with that reason. This is also the only possible source of legitimacy for any towering speculations we may like to develop.

Reason is 'above' Nature in the sense that reason 'won't fit in'. It is perhaps better pictured as 'this side of' Nature – between us and Nature. If by treating reason as a part of Nature you put yourself outside reason, there is then no way, except by begging the question, of getting inside again. There is no question of either attacking or defending reason. Reason is our starting point if we want to build up the idea of Nature at all; it is the prime reality on which the attribution of reality to anything else rests.