

METHODOLOGICAL NATURALISM

Methodological naturalism is not the same as philosophical naturalism. It is about a method - assuming that everything that happens even the unexplained is down to natural causes because once you start assuming magic you will soon have your reasoning and perception going out of control. Philosophical naturalism feels that magic and spirits and the supernatural are fictions. It is probably best to understand it not as saying that everything is natural but to understand it by what it rejects eg - no ghosts, no demons, no clairvoyance etc. Trying to summarise it by saying it means all is natural leads to debate about what natural means but listing the supernatural stuff that is rejected clears all that up.

While you can have methodological naturalism without philosophical naturalism, you cannot have philosophical naturalism without methodological.

The only way to philosophical naturalism is through methodological. It is possible to be the former and not realise it. It is safe to assume that methodologicals are in fact also philosophicals. It is a part of the philosophy of philosophical naturalism that methodological naturalism is necessary. It is a part but a core part. If you are not a full philosophical naturalist you are one in every other way.

Methodological naturalism is the assertion that we work as if there is no supernatural and we will not assume that it exists. It is not disbelief in the supernatural but rather unbelief. Methodological naturalism is the cornerstone of science. Science then has to ignore supernatural explanations and assume that everything has a natural explanation even if we will never know or guess what it is. It is said that methodological naturalism presupposes its own conclusion. It is saying, nature is probably all that there is and we will ignore anything that challenges this.

If you have to choose an option that presupposes its own conclusion then you have to choose it. It is better than doing nothing.

Methodological naturalism should be chosen and not supernaturalism. With supernaturalism you end up saying, nature is probably NOT all that there is and we will ignore anything that challenges this. If you are honest and consistent, you have to offer both natural and supernatural explanations for everything. When Louise is caught shop-lifting on camera and she denies it, some demon tricked the camera. That is one explanation. Another is that she really was shop-lifting. Where will it end? You will never feel sure of anything.

It is better to suppose there is somehow a rational explanation when somebody comes back from the dead than to end up suffering the perils of supernaturalism.

So it follows that even if methodological naturalism presupposes its own conclusion, it is still the only fair option.

Believers would read this and still try to make out that if you are a science who is sceptical of their claims that you are biased and not to be trusted! I cringe when I hear miracle stories for they encourage this slander.