

## NATURALISM - QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

What is naturalism?

Naturalism is love. It involves keeping God and belief in the supernatural out of your life. You reject belief in them as false in the hope that you can look after yourself and others better.

So anything that contradicts naturalism is somehow a threat to human goodness?

Yes. Even if there is a supernatural realm, we have to ignore it and treat people as if there is nothing but the natural level.

That is the only way to avoid hurting people over religious doctrine. Then there is no harm done if we are wrong. Any sane god would understand.

What objection is there to naturalism?

That if chance made us, we cannot know if our senses are right or if we can reason correctly. A pie made by chance would be a mess. One made by an intelligence would be a pie. Religion says we cannot trust our power to think at all unless we believe in an honest intelligence such as God gave this power to us.

What reply can you give to this?

It could be by chance that I think there is some intelligence that made me and my faculties and made them correctly. Belief in God solves nothing. It is irrational and hypocritical and contradictory to argue, "I can really learn for God gave me the power to learn."

What are we to do?

Since we have to assume our senses and reasoning powers can be trustworthy anyway - even if we say God gave them to us - we may as well just assume it. It is irrational to go further than that. And pointless. To go further is really to say our faculties are dubious and to try and make them worse!

Are there any other complaints?

Yes that even if naturalism does not disprove the reliability of our faculties and reasoning powers, it does not support this. So it would neither support them or not support them.

How do you deal with that objection to the reliability of our faculties and reasoning powers?

We test them every day. We experience that our senses correctly tell us what is out there. To suggest, "I cannot trust my sense of touch and know when I am burning if there isn't a God giving me this sense", is totally insane. We feel the pain of burning and that is how we know. Atheists are able to trust their senses.

What about the problem that if evolution is true, then natural selection ensures that we have the beliefs that are advantageous for us whether the beliefs are true or not?

This problem would mean that natural selection could cause our atheism and our belief in religion. But natural selection might ensure that we adopt the true beliefs that are good for us. Just because the beliefs are selected doesn't mean they have to be unreliable.

What other alleged moral problem is there with naturalism?

It seems to assert that violence and killing are perfectly natural and indeed the most natural things of all in terms of importance and how much they happen.

Is it a good thing to think that there is nothing out there but brutal cold relentless nature?

It is a good thing if you think right. Do not fear that the universe does not care for people can and do care and they are the universe too.

How can we call violence and killing bad if they are so natural?

It does not matter if something is programmed to cause pain and ill health or if it does it of its free will. It is still bad. Bad in a sense is worse if it is blind forces doing it.

Does Humanism have proof of being right?

Yes. It is as clear as  $1 + 1 = 2$  that Humanism when properly understood is right.

What is a default?

Whatever is an essential is a default.

Why is naturalism the default?

Because we can get through life without faith in the supernatural and indeed most people do. This involves having a Humanist outlook, we look after people without concern for Gods or god or spirits or prayers or religion.

What does each religion claim to be?

The default. It thinks every other religion is a distortion of real religion to a greater or lesser degree.

How are we to know which of the many philosophies or religions of the world is right?

We know that the unique simplicity and commonsense of the Humanist teaching proves that it is right. All this simplicity protects people from being misled and manipulated for it leaves little room for error and saves them from the clutches of those who twist the truth to give them convincing evidences for this and for that that are full of flaws and clever deceptions.

Even if there were no proof in our favour would it be clear that it is safest to follow our philosophy?

Yes and therefore we should.

What is a human right?

Rights are based on needs not wants. We need food, we need shelter, these are examples of human rights. We do not have a need for hair-dye - hair dye is a privilege not a right. Privileges are based on wants.

What is the relationship between naturalism and human rights?

Whoever understands human rights correctly becomes a naturalist.

How does religion oppose human rights?

By saying we have needs that we don't really have at all. For example, Christians say we need prayer. Buddhists disagree and say we need meditation. People who obscure human rights are only putting up blocks in the way of those who labour for human rights. Religion also says that we should be murdered by God if he wants to do it - this denies that our right to life. When religion speaks of a right to life it only means people should not kill one another.

Does any religion have the right to tell us we need a saviour, need a pope, need a Church, need a Bible?

No. To say it does is to declare that human rights are not real and something just becomes a right by saying its a right.

Does every religion claim that the main human right is the right to spiritual help and forgiveness?

Yes though that is a serious undermining of the fact that we need food on our plate not God. There is no excuse for anyone however charming who values belief more than people. People never died from having no religion or belief in God so there is no need.

What does their teaching imply about the relationship between religion and the state?

Since the state should protect human rights it should protect spirituality primarily and promote it so separation of Church and state would be a sin.

## WHY WE MUST REJECT MIRACLES AND THE SUPERNATURAL

What is a miracle?

An event that has no natural cause like a communion wafer bleeding without trickery. A miracle is what is not naturally possible. It is a supernatural occurrence. It is paranormal. Miracles are magical acts that are supposed to be of divine origin.

What is the problem with saying miracles are events that can only be explained by the supernatural and which are not naturally possible?

There could be an unknowable or unknown natural explanation. The ancients used to think lightning was supernatural and we now know it is not. Physics speaks of space warps which might account for blood coming form a statue. You can never ever prove anything is really supernatural. It is dogmatic to say an event is not naturally possible for you can't know that or give evidence. Religion blatantly lies when it says there is evidence for the supernatural.

What is the problem with saying a miracle is naturally possible?

It is saying that a miracle is a remarkable coincidence. But remarkable coincidences happen all the time. If that is all a miracle is, then there is never any evidence that it is supernatural.

What does the fact that saying there is a problem with miracles being non-natural or natural tell us?

That belief in miracles is incoherent and ridiculous. We must be as suspicious of miracle claims then as we are of magical claims.

Can miracles be distinguished from magic?

No. The power that can raise Jesus from the dead is as magical as the power to turn a prince into a frog.

What is grace?

Grace refers to God blessing you not because you deserve it but because he loves you.

What does grace mean to a Protestant?

It means God treating you as good and deserving of blessing though you are not. You will get heavenly happiness forever not because of anything you have done but because it is simply a gift from God.

What does grace mean to a Catholic?

Catholics deny the Protestant teaching that grace leaves us unchanged and unimproved. They say we have to co-operate with God's grace. Our part is the co-operation and his part is the good works he helps us to do.

Is grace a miracle?

Yes - it is suppose to raise us beyond our natural powers.

What if belief in miracle is just superstition?

Then Christianity which is all based on the idea of grace is utter nonsense.

Are miracles of divine origin?

It is easier for them to be trickery – perhaps done by aliens or something – than it is for them to be from a God. Trickery is common enough. There are many beings that deceive. It is easy to be deceived.

What does the idea that God can kill an innocent human person for a purpose and not deceive indicate?

Killing is worse than deceiving. If he can kill then he can deceive . Chances are that miracles are for tricking us and we should not heed their message.

Are miracles evidence for the existence of God?

They are not because they lie in saying that there is a God.

What does the Church claim about the miracles Jesus' allegedly performed?

That he did them to show the love of God and that he did them unselfishly and to help people. They were not capricious or ridiculous or grotesque or about showing off.

What is wrong with that?

God showing his love by instantly curing a sick person is an absurdity. He can use natural means to cure the person. If he really loves the person why does he need to cure in such a showy way?

We believe that nature is probably regular and what does that tell us about miracles?

We see a regularity. It is very probable that people who are dead three days stay dead. It is possible that there could be an exception. But this is so improbable that the evidence is outweighed by the evidence that people who are three days dead can't be resurrected. None of this denies the possibility of miracles but only their believability.

Are miracles against the claim that the behaviour of nature is generally predictable and repeatable?

Yes. Nature says a ball does not kick itself. When the ball is kicked we know that that does not refute this fact. That is because nature is involved both times. The expression law of nature does not mean a literal law but only that nature follows a natural course.

Do Christians say that theoretical improbability cannot be allowed to override actual evidence?

Yes, They say the resurrection of Jesus is improbable in theory. But this improbability is counteracted by the good evidence that Jesus rose.

What is the problem with that kin of thinking?

Evidence is about theoretical improbability and probability. Actual evidence is wrong if it points to something theoretically improbable.

Is the person who says miracles are unnatural and therefore do not happen and are not real being dogmatic and passing judgement on miracles without investigating them?

If a man accused of murdering his wife says that a demon murdered her and not him it is stupid to investigate his claim.

Are claims that miracles happen evil?

Yes and we should not seek them or encourage people to reverse reported miracles.

Has the Catholic Church proven that miracles such as instantaneous healings have happened?

It gets a declaration from the investigators and medical experts that the events are inexplicable. It accepts some of these as miracles. Inexplicable is not miraculous!

Do miracles cancel each other out and with what result?

Miracle believers ignore miracles that contradict their religious doctrine.

Do miracles reduce our trust in the workings of nature?

They do. For example, they make you less certain that a person convicted of killing another is really guilty. If we decide that miracles happen, then its possible that a demon faked the evidence that he did it. We might have no evidence that a demon did this, but that is not the point. The man should go free if some supernatural power might have been involved.

How do miracles undermine the principle that human life is of absolute importance?

I will say that putting a knife in someone's heart will kill her. But if I am a believer I can cast a little doubt on this for a miracle could save her. Belief in miracles undermine the fact that murder is murder. Miracles urging belief cannot be true to themselves and call us to a better way of living. The weakening may be very slight but life is so important that nothing can be allowed to do that.

To what extent do miracles reduce our trust?

They deprive us of a methodology for checking reality. The person suffering from delusions might be seeing real visions.

How do miracles imply that there is an erratic mad power?

Yes. That makes them dangerous as well.

But what if unknown laws of nature are doing the miracles?

It is better to say that it is them than to say it is a supernatural being for you can never understand the supernatural but you can, at least in theory, understand nature.

Should we believe in miracles even if they do happen?

No for they undermine evidence and nothing has the right to do that. We shall consider them to be lies and mistakes.

Can I believe in spirits with occult powers running the earth who are good?

No. That is as bad as believing in God and for all the same reasons.

Do we need to believe in miracles?

No.

If there is testimony and evidence for miracles should we believe?

No. There has to be a limit to what should be believed and miracles break that limit.

Do we need to assume that miracles and magic are not real no matter who says they are?

Yes. We have the need to assume that certain things are impossible. For example, my beliefs affect how I act and feel. If I think its possible for the sun to die tomorrow that is bad for me. So I assume that it will rise. I trust that it will rise. This is a reasonable leap

Putting aside all I have read so far, should I accept the evidence of others that miracles have happened?

It depends. Only those who investigate miracles to a reasonable an adequate degree or those who have experienced them have the right to believe in them.

What is the difference between the unexplained and the inexplicable?

The unexplained means the explanation isn't found or findable. The inexplicable means all natural explanations have been considered and found wanting so a supernatural explanation is perhaps needed. It is still possible that one of the natural explanations has been unjustly or erroneously eliminated. It can never be known or proven that an occurrence is supernatural.

If it cannot be proven that an occurrence is supernatural what does that imply?

That believers in miracles are really believers in the possibility that certain miracles have taken place. The Christian ones deny that its possible that God gave the Koran to Muhammad while assert its possible that Jesus rose from the dead and wrote the Bible and was God. Just double-standards galore!

Should we know and understand the solution for how a God of goodness can let evil happen before we can say he may do miracles or that he does them?

Yes. Otherwise we end up less confident that they come from a good source. It would be at least partly wicked to follow them.

Does something seemingly being supernatural tell us exactly what is supernatural about it?

Never! Suppose we have strong evidence that something supernatural happened when Jesus supposedly rose. The miracle could be that the apostles had a hallucination. Or it could be that somebody was able to pretend to be Jesus. Or that Jesus never died but merely miraculously healed after being buried alive.

Should miracles be classed as unexplained rather than as miracles?

Yes.

What if I can assume miracles happen or magic is real?

I know then I must assume that everything is possible.

What about the claim that conflict between religions need not necessarily mean that religion is to blame?

People who claim this say that nobody kills others over disagreement about bread and wine being turned into Jesus Christ but religions fight and disagree over territory and money. But the religions indirectly fight about the doctrines. They use the doctrines to cause a division and the division leads to competition which leads to fear, war and sectarianism.

## Finally

The way nature works is a better way to describe what we mean by natural law than the words natural law. The way or the law if you like is unreasoning, unintelligent, unconscious, and unmoral. Nature may be dependable but that does not mean it knows what it is doing or that somebody who knows set it up. All chaos has some order by accident.

Evidence for spirit, God or the soul or free will (when understood as the supernatural power to choose good and evil without being programmed) is good for nothing because you simply cannot have evidence that nonsense is true. It is incoherent. You might say you have evidence. It is your interpretation at work not the evidence.

Opposition to naturalism is more about wanting to make out we have a supernatural aspect to our nature maybe a soul or something than about miracles or anything else. It is selfish and though God will be declared an important part of belief the real motive is to try and think you are better than matter and more than matter. Opponents of naturalism typically claim that because love and thoughts etc seem non-physical that proves they are non-physical or have nothing material about them. The argument is, "The supernatural exists because it seems to." That is the fundamental assumption behind belief in souls and God and magic and miracles. It is irrational. The argument can only be right if it is magically correct for it makes no rational sense. Its being right would be the biggest miracle of all and the one necessary miracle and foundation of the other miracles. It is the foundational miracle - the miracle without which there can be no miracles. It needs to be right otherwise miracles have no point. There is no point in rivers and oceans if water cannot exist.

Though we insist on saying there is more to us than biology in practice we treat love and other things as chemical reactions. You do not tell a person in the grip of a depressive illness who is not responding to counseling to love others more. You tell them to get chemicals in the form of drugs. Religion makes a lot out of us being more than chemicals but it makes too much out of it. In practice, it is not very important if love is spiritual but it is important if it is chemical. It is only a small step to naturalism for we are nearly all and always naturalist anyway. We may as well take the step.

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Deny God and nature becomes the new God and as people and animals are part of nature that means it can be said to have a caring aspect for their caring is part of nature.