

## C.S. Lewis's terminology

### 1 Definition of a miracle

"I use the word *Miracle* to mean an interference with Nature by a supernatural power."<sup>1</sup>

#### Compare Hume's definitions

"A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature ..."<sup>2</sup>

"A miracle may be accurately defined, *a transgression of a law of nature by a particular volition of the Deity, or by the interposition of some invisible agent.*"<sup>3</sup>

### 2 Natural vs. supernatural

"The Natural is what springs up, or comes forth, or arrives, or goes on, *of its own accord*: the given, what is there already: the spontaneous, the unintended, the unsolicited. What the Naturalist believes is that the ultimate Fact, the thing you can't go behind, is a vast process in space and time which is *going on of its own accord*. Inside that total system every particular event (such as your sitting reading this book) happens because some other event has happened ....

The Supernaturalist agrees with the Naturalist that there must be something which exists in its own right; some basic Fact whose existence it would be nonsensical to try to explain because this Fact is itself the ground or starting-point of all explanations. But he does not identify this Fact with 'the whole

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<sup>1</sup> C.S. Lewis *Miracles* (HarperSanFrancisco, 2001), p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Section 10, part 1, second to last paragraph, p. 76.

<sup>3</sup> Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Section 10, part 1, footnote to second to last paragraph, p. 77.

October 25

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show'. He thinks that things fall into two classes. In the first class we find either things or (more probably) One Thing which is basic and original, which exists on its own. In the second we find things which are merely derivative from that One Thing. The one basic Thing has caused all the other things to be. It exists on its own; they exist because it exists. They will cease to exist if it ever ceases to maintain them in existence; they will be altered if it ever alters them.

The difference between the two views might be expressed by saying that Naturalism gives us a democratic, Supernaturalism a monarchical, picture of reality."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Lewis *Miracles*, pp. 7-9.