

## **Economic Science and the Poverty of Naturalism: C. S. Lewis's "Argument from Reason"**

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### **Abstract**

Many of the sciences (including economics) have been dominated by a naturalist worldview that generally assumes that the universe and life are purposeless and that mankind is simply a more complex, material version of everything else in the natural world. The renowned scholar and author C. S. Lewis offers an important link with the work of economists who have seen scholars' embrace of positivism and scientism as contrary to the development of knowledge regarding human action. In examining naturalism, Lewis shows that material "facts" alone cannot provide any conclusions without some independent basis to evaluate such data. He claims that the analysis of any world requires the existence of scientists whose views are not mechanically determined by the world they are examining. In so doing, Lewis clearly understands that reason, free will, and individual choice are not illusions; they are intrinsic and objective truths – nonnegotiable presuppositions – upon which human inquiry and economic science rest. Such understanding necessitates a theistic dualism of both a material and immaterial, natural and supernatural, physical and metaphysical reality.

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### **I. Introduction**

For many years, the natural and social sciences (including economics) have been dominated by the naturalist worldview that the universe and life are purposeless and that humankind is simply a more complex version of everything else in the material world. In other words, an individual human is no more and no less than a system of molecular processes determined by physical laws. In this system, all human endeavors and ideas are the product of a mechanistic, causal process of physical events.

Although probably best known for his fiction, Oxbridge University scholar C. S. Lewis also examines the naturalist worldview and makes the case that material "facts" alone cannot provide any

conclusions without some independent basis to evaluate such data. He claims that the analysis of any world requires the existence of scientists whose views are not *themselves* mechanically determined by the world being examined. Lewis presents the “argument from reason” that the enterprise of science cannot exist if a strictly naturalist view of science were true. He maintains that efforts to apply a naturalist theory to knowledge, including economic science, lead to a denial of the validity of reasoning and the notion of truth. In this paper, I argue that C. S. Lewis should be recognized as making an important contribution to our understanding of the foundations of the natural and social sciences, including economics. Using Lewis’s analysis as a starting point, I argue that for reason, free will, and science to be possible, a worldview based on a dualist theism is required. Moreover, I argue that such a perspective needed to be widely adopted before all sciences, including economics, could be established. In the process, I contrast science with scientism; discuss how science arose from the Christian theist worldview, as opposed to other religions; link Christian thought with the central insight of methodological individualism and the rise of intellectual and social movements for liberty and the abolition of slavery; examine how Lewis’s “argument from reason” refutes naturalism as self-contradictory; demonstrate how naturalism fails in its abolition of the self; and, in the process, show why dualist theism is necessarily true.

## II. Science Versus Scientism

The naturalist (modernist, structuralist) worldview posits that all of reality is defined in terms of the natural or material world and that no parallel or extranatural or supernatural world exists apart from *this* natural world. As Lewis notes,

[T]he Naturalist thinks that nothing but Nature exists, the word *Nature* means to him merely “everything” or “the whole show” or “whatever there is.” . . . 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 . . . happens because some other event has happened; in the long run, because the Total Event is happening. Each particular thing . . . is what it is because other things are what they are; and so, eventually, because the whole system is what it is. All

the things and events are so completely interlocked that no one of them can claim the slightest independence from “the whole show.” None of them exists “on its own” or “goes on of its own accord” except in the sense that it exhibits, at some particular place and time, that general “existence on its own” or “behavior of its own accord” which belongs to “Nature” (the great interlocked event) as a whole. (2001b, p.6–8, emphasis in original)

Lewis then notes the naturalist’s determinist dilemma regarding the existence of individual free will, including the naturalist’s own ability to argue *for* naturalism or any proposition: “Thus no *thoroughgoing* Naturalist believes in free will: free will would mean that human beings have the power of independent action, the power of doing something more or other than what was involved by the total series of events. And any such separate power or originating events is what the Naturalist denies. Spontaneity, originality, action ‘on its own,’ is a privilege reserved for ‘the whole show,’ which he calls *Nature*.” (2001b, p.8, emphasis in original).

Naturalism as a creed is a very old one. A number of the pre-Socratic philosophers (e.g., Thales, Empedocles, Anaxagoras, and Democritus) were probably the first to propose an early version of naturalism. Plato, Parmenides, and Aristotle discredited the pre-Socratic naturalists, however, and it was not until much later that the naturalist creed resurfaced in a major way in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, based on the work of David Hume, Auguste Comte, Henri de Saint-Simon, Friedrich Nietzsche, Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, Charles Darwin, and others (Markos, 2003, p.32). With this worldview, Nietzsche logically proposed that man “is beyond good and evil,” and behaviorist-naturalist B. F. Skinner claimed that man is “beyond freedom and dignity.”

Of course, one may make the objection that Lewis overgeneralizes; some naturalists do *not* consider themselves to be strict materialists or physicalists. And some nonphysicalist naturalists, such as Buddhists, claim that matter itself ultimately is not basic to a reality, which they still define entirely by the universe – a difference really without a distinction. All naturalists, however, believe that the natural world itself is all that there is to reality, so my discussion pertains to all versions of naturalism and examines the roots of science, especially the study of human behavior, reason, the mind,

and the requisites for rational human inquiry.

In contrast to the naturalists, Lewis provides a powerful framework to reestablish the essential need for an overarching worldview before science can proceed and have any meaning.<sup>1</sup> Although trained in classical and medieval philosophy and literature rather than in economics, he offers an important link with the work of economists of various stamps – classical, Austrian, public choice, and neoclassical – who have similarly seen the embrace of positivism and scientism as contrary to the development of knowledge regarding human action. Like Lewis, such economists can be termed *social ontologists* because they believe in an objective, rational reality “both as a logical starting point and as a criterion of validity” (Kauder, 1958, qtd. in Rothbard, 1973, p.47). Murray Rothbard’s definition of scientism can be used to sum up their view: “Scientism is the profoundly unscientific attempt to transfer uncritically the methodology of the physical sciences to the study of human action. Both fields of inquiry must, it is true, be studied by the use of reason – the mind’s identification of reality. But then it becomes crucially important, in reason, not to neglect the critical attribute of human action: that, alone in nature, human beings possess a rational consciousness” (1960, 163).

In discussing scientism, Lewis draws on the classic writings of Aristotle, Plato, the apostle John, and Augustine, as well as on the more contemporary work of Thomas Aquinas and the Scholastics, Richard Hooker, Samuel Johnson, G. K. Chesterton, Owen Barfield, and others. In particular, both Aquinas’s notion of “common sense” (*communis sensus*) as described in his *Summa theologica* and the legacy of rational theism found in Jewish, Islamic, Christian, and certain pagan writers – the core philosophical system of the West – had a powerful effect on Lewis. To him, the culture of “modernism” is not just an historical aberration of “common sense,” but a profound threat to the pursuit of truth, goodness, and civilization itself.

Lewis’s notion of common rationality (sense) rests in part on the notion that each individual human being has an intrinsic understanding of an objective, universal, and natural legal order of

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<sup>1</sup> In economics and other fields, this is not to say that many scholars who may embrace or are oblivious to the claims of naturalism are not in fact producing important scientific findings, but that they are doing so despite naturalism. As argued in this paper, science requires a non-naturalist framework for rational analysis to proceed and have any meaning.

truth and morality (the “natural law,” or what Lewis calls the “Tao”)<sup>2</sup> upon which he or she discerns, chooses, and acts (2001a, p.18–19, p.83–101; see also Lewis, 1952, 1970). For Lewis, each individual responds to and can come to know and experience this reality of truth because it is a “common knowledge.”

Lewis is particularly critical of the modern materialist definition of man as “a part of nature, in the same sense that a stone is, or a cactus, or a camel” (Bronowski, 1965, p.2). In response to this view, Lewis notes not only that no stone, cactus, or camel possesses reason, but that to claim that man is no different is to deny the existence of humankind itself and incoherently to reduce man to a mechanistic entity – a claim that defies all “common sense.” To underscore the basic problem in the strict materialist view, he quotes the Marxist biologist J. B. S. Haldane, “If my mental processes are determined wholly by the motion 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” (Haldane, 2001, qtd. in Lewis, 2001b, p.15).

Although some nonreductive naturalists do not consider themselves strict materialists, Lewis maintains that even nonmaterialist naturalism fails. As Victor Reppert characterizes this failure, naturalists must explain their views and then clarify their explanations, which means they must reason, and therefore “reason must be viewed as a fundamental cause in the universe . . . a huge concession to positions such as theism, idealism and pantheism” (2003, p.51).

In *The Counter-revolution of Science* (1952), F. A. Hayek examines scientism and echoes Jean Baptiste-Say by distinguishing between the qualitative (subjectivist) nature of the social sciences (the study of human action) and the quantitative (objectivist) nature of the natural sciences. According to this distinction, to understand social phenomena, one must start by recognizing that human action is based on subjective *choices by individuals*, which then produce objective outcomes.

Human action is thus qualitative: individuals choose and use specific means to achieve ends. The true sciences rest on this fact, and its denial is a major cause of so many of the erroneous and very

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<sup>2</sup> Lewis’s use of the term “Tao” to describe natural moral law has nothing to do with the naturalist philosophy of Taoism.

harmful directions in public debate. Agreeing with C. S. Lewis's views, Rothbard notes, "If men are like stones, if they are not purposive beings and do not strive for ends, then there is no economics, no psychology, no ethics, no science or man whatever" (1960, p.163).

Interestingly enough, all philosophical naturalists exempt themselves from their own theories, placing themselves *outside* the natural world, which they claim is the only thing that exists, and implicitly acknowledging the Aristotelian/Thomist law of non-contradiction. They believe that someday they will have a physical explanation for human choice, but because such knowledge itself would then be determined, how will they know one way or the other?

### III. Science and Religion

Many naturalists argue that science is incompatible with religion, but Western science developed from the Thomist "commonsense" view that the universe is orderly and rationally intelligible. Rodney Stark argues that the scientific revolution was not the result of an alleged Enlightenment battle of "secular forces of reason" against the "irrational religious dogma" of the Middle Ages, but "the culmination of many centuries of systematic progress by medieval Scholastics, sustained by that uniquely Christian twelfth-century invention, the university. Not only were science and religion compatible, they were inseparable – the rise of science was achieved by deeply religious Christian scholars" (2005, p.12).<sup>3</sup>

Scientific insights were rooted in a Christian theology that went back to the very origins of the Christian Church and were developed in the work of many early writers. For example, Quintus Tertullian of the second century A.D. said, "Reason is a thing of God, inasmuch as there is nothing which God the Maker of all has not provided, disposed, ordained by reason – nothing which He has not willed should be handled and understood by reason" (*On Repentance*, qtd. in Stark, 2005, p.7). Clement of Alexandria in the third century noted, "Do not think that we are to be asserted by reason. For indeed it is not safe to commit these things to bare faith without reason, since assuredly truth cannot be without reason" (qtd. in Lindberg and Numbers, 1986, p.27–28). By the fifth century, Augustine was

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<sup>3</sup> For an examination of the development of economics by the Scholastic moralists and philosophers, see Roover, 1976; Grice-Hutchinson, 1952, 1978; Moss, 1993; Rothbard, 1995, p.51–64, p.97–133; Chafuen, 2003.

expressing the conventional view of the day: “Heaven forbid that God should hate in us that by which he made us superior to the animals! Heaven forbid that we should believe in such a way as not to accept or seek reasons, since we could not even believe if we did not possess rational souls. . . . [F]or faith to precede in certain matters of great moment that cannot yet be grasped, surely the very small portion of reason that persuades us of this must precede faith” (qtd. in Southern, 1970, p.49). In short, the earliest Christian teachings stressed humans’ inherent faculty of reason as central to understanding reality.

Stark further notes that real science arose only in Christian Europe (2005, p.13). Virtually all of the founders of the various scientific fields were Christian theists, including Nicolaus Copernicus, Johannes Kepler, Galileo Galilei, Robert Boyle, Isaac Newton, and Gregor Mendel. Both Lewis and the philosopher and mathematician Alfred North Whitehead (1967) maintain that science arose only because the Christian theistic beliefs of medieval European scientists led them to consider the universe to be a systematic realm of objective reality and that non-Christian beliefs hindered or prevented science.

Whitehead further notes that polytheistic, pantheistic, and monist views were too irrational and detached from humanity to make science possible. In China, naturalist religions such as Confucianism and Taoism upheld essences or ideas that were impersonal and that created and changed nothing. Based on his extensive studies of the history of Chinese technology, Joseph Needham concurs that the Chinese failed to develop science *because* their naturalistic religious views, which included neither a rational personal divinity nor rational earthly beings, prevented them from believing in natural laws (1954, v.1, p.581). They simply did not believe that science mattered or was possible.

The ancient Greeks and Romans’ polytheistic system did not include a creator who was not subject to the same universe of continuous cycles of progress and decline affecting mortals. According to this system, inanimate objects were living beings with personal aims and foibles and thus were not subject strictly to physical laws. Major Greek thinkers, including Plato and Aristotle, also rejected the notion of progress. Indeed, Aristotle believed that the same ideas recur to men without end (Stark, 2005, p.18–20). Michael Rea notes that “Parmenides threatened to bring natural

sciences to a standstill with his powerful arguments for the conclusion that the world is unchanging, unmoving, ungenerated, and indestructible. . . . [And Plato] share[d] the Parmenidean view that the most fundamentally real things in the world are unchanging” (2002, p.23–24). Because of such views, science was unable to develop in the Greek and Roman worlds.

In Islam, the world was not created and does not function according to rational principles; the Qur’an teaches that the universe is governed by a *very* active God whose sheer will continually keeps things afloat. As Stark notes, although Judaism and Islam embrace a creator God, they by and large emphasize a literal approach to Scripture as law to be followed, not as the basis for inquiry (2005, p.21, citing Farrar, 1994, p.199). In contrast, Christian scholars such as Augustine and Aquinas were able to learn from Greek philosophy, but in so doing they also questioned it and rejected its antiscientific elements.

Christian theologians believed that by using reason, man can achieve a greater understanding of God’s will (Stark, 2005, p.9). This Christian understanding of reason, free will, and the idea of progress was unique in the world and gave birth to scientific study in the West because “of the enthusiastic conviction that the human intellect can penetrate nature’s secrets” (Stark, 2005, p.16–17).

#### **IV. Methodological Individualism**

The Christian theologians’ bold advances in thinking arose in part from the revolutionary insight of *methodological individualism* in the study of human action, wherein the individual is considered primary. All social institutions and changes are the product of *individual* actions and interactions, and all cultural and other factors are put into play *by* individuals as they think, choose, and act (see Elster, 1989, p.13). Whereas most other early cultures and religions viewed human society in terms of the tribe, polis, or collective, Christian thought focused on the individual citizen, which directly shaped subsequent European political philosophy (Stark, 2005, p.23).

This focus produced a radical change in a world in which, despite notable but limited exceptions (see Berman, 1983; Byock, 1988; Friedman, 1979 and Thompson, 2005, p.365–84), slavery, human sacrifice, and nearly universal and unyielding despotism ruled. In this world people were treated as mere members of a group without rights, despite notable but limited exceptions of political



decentralization. With Christianity, each and every person is “a child of God” or holy object (*res sacra homo*) who has free will and is responsible for the choices he or she makes. In this tradition, Aquinas stated, “A man can direct and govern his own actions also. Therefore the rational creature participates in the divine providence not only in being governed but also in governing” (*Summa Theologica*, qtd. in Stark, 2005, p.25). Similarly, Augustine explained that “without any delusive representation of images or phantasms, I am most certain that I am. . . . [So] I am not at all afraid of the arguments of the Academicians, who say, What if you are deceived? For if I am deceived, I am. For he who is not cannot be deceived; and if I am deceived, by this same token I am” (*The City of God*, qtd. in Stark, 2005, p.25–26).

This argument is consistent with Rothbard’s view of economics. Rothbard notes how scientism attempts to deny the reality of individual choice through the organismic analogies of *methodological holism* or *collectivism* that “attribute consciousness to ‘social wholes’ which do not exist apart from the individuals that do exist.” But “[s]ociety,’ ‘the group,’ ‘the public,’ ‘the community,’ etc., do not have values nor pursue ends.” In rejecting methodological collectivism as ill-conceived, Rothbard thus firmly concludes that “there is no ‘public good,’ ‘general welfare,’ etc., above and beyond the welfare and goods of individuals” (1960, p.171–72).

Before the Christian era, Marcus Tullius Cicero and others discussed the concept of the self (individualism) and free will, but it was not until Jesus personally asserted in words and deeds the concept of moral equality before God and responsibility to God, and that Christian theologians then made this concept a central feature of their doctrine, that the rights of *each and every individual* were championed and slavery was condemned. As explained by the third-century Christian theologian L. Caecilius Firmianus Lactantius, “The second constituent of Justice is *equality*. I mean this . . . in the sense of treating others as equals. . . . For God who gives being and life to men wished us all to be equal. . . . Since human worth is measured in spiritual not in physical terms, we ignore our various physical situations: slaves are not slaves to us, but we treat them and address them as brothers in spirit” (qtd. in Stark, 2005, p.71).

Subsequently, with the end of the Roman Empire, opposition to slavery grew (starting in A.D. 324 with the Christian Council of Granges), and by the seventh century priests were pressing owners to

free their slaves to “ensure their own salvation” (Stark, 2005, p.29). In the eighth century, Charlemagne, king of the Franks and leader of the Holy Roman Empire, opposed slavery. In the eleventh century, Wulfen and Anselm successfully campaigned to eliminate slavery throughout most of Europe. During the Middle Ages, despite the opposition of numerous despots, the Vatican issued papal bulls in 1430, 1537, and 1639 condemning slavery elsewhere in no uncertain terms (Stark, 2005, p.200–201).

In the sixteenth century, numerous Christian clerics led the opposition to the widespread abuses and enslavement of Native Americans by the Castilian conquistadors after the Spanish conquest. These included the Spanish friar and bishop Bartolomé de Las Casas, author of *In Defense of the Indians* (1992, orig. pub. ca. 1552), who received his law degree at the School of Salamanca. Las Casas showed the conquistadors in Spain and the Americas that their violence and cruelty toward Amerindians were entirely at odds with the legacy of all Christian writing and teaching: “Our Christian religion is suitable for and may be adapted to all the nations of the world, and all alike may receive it; and no one may be deprived of his liberty, nor may he be enslaved on the excuse that he is a natural slave” (qtd. in Liggio, 2000, p.2). In addition, Pope Paul III’s 1537 bull *Sublimis Deus* stated, “The said Indians and all other people who may later be discovered by Christians, are by no means to be deprived of their liberty or the possession of their property . . . nor should they in any way be enslaved” (qtd. in Liggio, 2000, p.3). Although practice did not always live up to precept, this persistent Christian opposition to slavery nevertheless spread, ultimately resulting in the abolition of slavery throughout Latin America, in the British Empire under the leadership of Christian Parliamentarian William Wilberforce, and in the United States because of the Christian-inspired persistence of William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolitionists.

## V. Science versus Naturalism

Influenced greatly by this Christian tradition, C. S. Lewis was thus profoundly concerned by the rise of scientism and its dehumanization of humankind. A. J. Ayer’s naturalism epitomizes what Lewis opposes in his philosophical books *The Abolition of Man*, *Miracles*, and *Mere Christianity*, and in his novels *That Hideous Strength* and *The Pilgrim’s Regress*. Even Ayer, when asked whether any

shortcomings existed in his logical positivism, had to admit, “I suppose the most important of the defects was that nearly all of it was false” (qtd. in Aeschliman, 1983, p.60). In his work, Ayer sought to refute the basis for objectivity with his theory of emotivism, wherein when an individual says, “X is good,” he is only saying, “I like X.” But Lewis notes the absurdity of the argument, and even Ayer himself apparently understood that the claim that all facts are objective and all values are subjective is itself an assumption. If, according to Ayer, only “factual statements” can have validity, Ayer’s theory must also simply then be an article of faith and hence untrue because his view is itself “nonfactual.”

Such incoherent, radical subjectivism and reductionism are a major target of Lewis’s work both because they are inherently contradictory to rational philosophy, upon which science rests, and because they strip human culture of any basis to oppose barbarism and the destruction of civil society itself. Lewis notes: “[A]s soon as we take the final step of reducing our own species to the level of mere Nature, the whole process is stultified. . . . [I]f man chooses to treat himself as raw material, raw material he will be: not raw material to be manipulated, as he fondly imagined, by himself, but by mere appetite, that is [by] Nature, in the person of his de-humanized Conditioners.” (2001a, p.71, p.81). In short, Lewis demonstrates not only that all propositions, including naturalism, depend on philosophical principles that are independent of the “whole show” of nature, but also that rational theism is central to both science *and* ethics, exactly as the “common sense” of Aquinas and the Scholastics claimed.

## **VI. Reason versus Naturalism**

Lewis’s “argument from reason” is the argument from rational inference, or, as Reppert defines it, “[t]he argument . . . that . . . the basic explanation for some events in the universe must be given in terms of reason, not in terms of the blind operation of nature obeying the laws of nature” (2003, p.53). Some have argued that the existence of abstract propositions with no temporal properties resolves the problems of naturalism, but if physics is a closed system, such propositions cannot exist independently and cannot affect the world without some space-time presence. Hence, such a claim is merely an attempt to smuggle back into the picture some form of schizophrenic dualism – in other words, what the naturalist tries to

rule out of existence.

As noted earlier, Lewis states that if naturalism is true, then everything *must* be entirely explainable in terms of the “Total System” of nature, and if anything, such as the necessities of reason, require independence of nature, then naturalism is “in ruins” (2001b, p.20). In so doing, Lewis argues that for any mental act, there are two forms of the causal word *because*, or connections that produce thought: connection by “cause and effect” and connection by “ground and consequent.” The statement, “Grandfather is ill today *because* he ate lobster yesterday,” is an example of the former in that it gives the cause of grandfather’s illness. The statement, “Grandfather must be ill today *because* he hasn’t gotten up yet,” is an example of the latter because it refers not to the cause of his illness, but to evidence of his being ill. As Lewis states, “The one indicates a dynamic connection between events or ‘states of affairs’; the other, a logical relation between beliefs or assertions” (2001a, p.22–23).

Although everything in nature is related by cause and effect, the bases for rational inference depend on the conclusions of ground-and-consequent relations. Lewis notes, however, that cause-and-effect accounts of beliefs are used in naturalism to try to prove the absence of any ground-and-consequent relations. But to have a rational inference, an individual must perceive a ground-and-consequent relation. “Unless our conclusion is the logical conclusion from a ground it will be worthless and could be true only by a fluke. Unless it is the effect of a cause, it cannot occur at all. 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” (Lewis, 2001a, p.23–24). In other words, theist dualism is necessarily true. Lewis then asks: “But even if grounds do exist, what exactly have they got to do with the actual occurrence of the belief as a psychological event? If it is an event it must be caused. It must in fact be simply one link in a causal chain which stretches back to the beginning and forward to the end of time. How could such a trifle as lack of logical grounds prevent the belief’s occurrence or how could the existence of grounds promote it?” His answer is “[o]ne thought can cause another not by being, but by being seen to be, a ground for it” (2001a, p.24–25). However, according to Lewis and Reppert, this kind of causation is not possible for naturalism because, in contrast to events in nature that “are determined by the previous position of material particles, the laws of

physics, and (perhaps) a chance factor,” rational inference is a logical connection not based on any spatio-temporal location, and any account of the relation between reasons and causes must show “the role that convincing plays in our cognitive economy. The idea of being convinced by something seems to imply that reasons are playing a causal role” (Reppert, 2003, p.67–69). Furthermore, explanatory exclusion is intrinsic even to the naturalist viewpoint in the claim that only naturalist causations can be true. The ontological commitments of these explanations must be examined. If the only kind of causation in such a view is physical, “there cannot be causal explanations that require non-materialist ontological commitments” (Reppert, 2003, p.69).

In critically analyzing all variations of naturalism, Alvin Plantinga (1993) has also shown that the existence of God is basic epistemically, meaning that it is rational to believe in the existence of God without inferring that God exists from some other belief. Like Lewis, however, Plantinga is also a critical rationalist who maintains that powerful and positive arguments *for* theism also exist.

## VII. The Argument from Reason

Victor Reppert breaks down Lewis’s “argument from reason” into six arguments: intentionality, truth, mental causation, psychological relevance of logical laws, unity of consciousness in rational inference, and reliability of our rational faculties. I discuss only the argument from truth here.<sup>4</sup>

Eliminative materialists Paul Churchland and Patricia Churchland believe that if one cannot precisely identify in the brain the actual location of a belief, it does not exist. They understand, though, that the logical implication of their view is to deny the idea of truth itself. According to Paul Churchland, “If we are ever to understand the dynamics of cognitive activity, therefore, we may have to reconceive our basic unit of cognition as something other than the sentence or proposition, and reconceive its virtue as something other than truth, [which], after all, is but the central element in a clutch of descriptive and normative theories . . . and we can expect conceptual progress here as elsewhere” (1990, p.150–51, qtd. in Reppert, 2003, p.76). From a strictly biological perspective, Patricia Churchland further explains that any organism’s nervous system works solely to position

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<sup>4</sup> I discuss all six in the longer paper on which this article is based (Theroux, 2007).

body parts to enhance the chances for survival (i.e., feeding, fleeing, fighting, and reproducing), but in such an explanation “[t]ruth, whatever that is, takes the hindmost” (1987, p.548).

To the Churchlands, nothing in the brain can be true or false, good or bad, just or unjust; if such notions appear in explanations of cognition, they should be discarded immediately. The result of this line of thinking is an epistemic relativism that makes reason and thus science itself impossible. In the very act of presenting their view, however, they in effect refute themselves. Hence, as Reppert finds, (1) if naturalism is true, then no states of the person can be either true or false; (2) some states of the person can be true or false (implied by the existence of rational inference); and (3) therefore, naturalism is false (2003, p.77). Plantinga has examined in depth the reliability (warrant) of human reasoning to be true or not. In *Warrant and Proper Function*, he confirms Lewis’s dualist conclusion that “naturalism in epistemology can flourish only in the context of supernaturalism in metaphysics” (1993, p.194).

### **VIII. Naturalism and the Abolition of Self**

Evolutionary biologists Richard Dawkins and Daniel Dennett admit that a strictly genetic account of cognition is not sufficient, so they supplement their theory with “memes,” the conceptual and linguistic structures of cultural evolution. Yet Dawkins notes that memetic theory *still* cannot account for consciousness, and Dennett claims that there is *no single place* in the brain where everything “comes together” (see Menuge, 2004, p.132). One of the key problems facing such naturalists is that even with the theory of memes, they cannot account for the human brain’s coordination process – the psychological integration that occurs in theoretical reasoning. Because they cannot explain the existence of the individual mind, they thus have had little choice but, incredibly, to deny the existence of the self. But again, as Lewis has shown, to claim that individuals have no viewpoints is to present a thought that is possible only by having a point of view. In short, the denial of intentional states is incoherent.

In contrast to Dawkins and Dennett, functionalist psychologist Jerry Fodor indicates that “[n]obody has the slightest idea how anything material could be conscious. Nobody even knows what it would be like to have the slightest idea of how anything material could be conscious” (1992, p.5) Cognitive psychologist and

philosopher Ned Block maintains that “[w]e have no conception of our physical or functional nature that allows us to understand how it could explain our subjective experience. . . . In the case of consciousness we have nothing – zilch” (1994, p.221). Even when scientists do look into consciousness, they merely attempt to reduce it to its physical parts. In trying in vain “to prove that ‘brain mechanisms account for the mind,’” even Harvard neurologist and brain surgeon Wilder Penfield finally concluded that it could not be done and was “forced to choose the proposition that our being is to be explained on the basis of two fundamental elements, material and immaterial, physical and metaphysical” (qtd. in Aeschliman, 1983, p.21).

### **IX. Conclusion**

To deny the “argument from reason” is to deny the possibility of science itself. As Lewis and others have shown, the existence of rational inference cannot be explained in terms of purely materialistic causes. If one believes in the “uniformity of nature” or in “an innate sense of the fitness of things,” and if naturalism is true, then there is no basis to know if the “innate sense” is true because it is simply the product of the quest for survival. But if theism is true, then “our repugnance to disorder is derived from nature’s creator and ours.” Hence, Lewis agrees with Whitehead that science arose because of the Christian theistic beliefs of the original scientists: “Men became scientific because they expected Law in Nature, and they expected Law in Nature because they believed in a Legislator. . . . Try to make Nature absolute and you find that her uniformity is not even probable” (2001a, p.159–69).

As a result, we have a clear teleological explanation that we know from “common sense” what uniquely makes the scientific enterprise possible. The naturalistic explanations that work for falling rocks and drifting continents do *not* work for consciousness and reasoning. The problem with naturalism regarding reasoning is *not* just that we do not know the physical explanation for reason. Naturalism itself provides a reason to believe that reasoning should not exist even though its existence cannot be denied without undermining the science from which naturalism is supported.

C. S. Lewis clearly understood that reason, free will, and individual choice are not illusions; they are intrinsic and objective truths, nonnegotiable presuppositions upon which human inquiry,

science, truth, and civilization rest. And such understanding necessitates a theistic dualism involving a material and immaterial, natural and supernatural, physical and metaphysical reality. In this regard, science historically developed only as a result of Christian insights into this dualism, and to deny the metaphysical basis for science is to make science itself unintelligible and impossible. Lewis's "argument for reason" is hence essential and correct, and naturalism (along with its consequent scientism and methodological collectivism) is an erroneous and self-contradictory view that not only fails, but breeds untruths that have led historically to repeated human folly and unspeakable horrors.

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