



Naturalism, Supernaturalism, and Scientific Explanation

SEMINAR

Prof Peter Harrison, FAHA
University of Queensland

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2 pm, Rm 4.36, Run Run Shaw Tower, HKU



By Luigi156

Naturalism, in its most general sense, is the denial that there are any spiritual or supernatural entities. Some have suggested there is a good argument for naturalism based on the history of science:

(1) Science proceeds on the basis of methodological naturalism, understood as a provisional bracketing out of supernaturalistic explanations; (2) science conducted according to this strategy is highly successful; therefore, (3) the original assumption (methodological naturalism) must be correct (ontological naturalism). This argument is susceptible to two challenges, based on examples from the history of science: first, our present natural-supernatural distinction is novel and past historical actors operated with a very different understanding the natural and supernatural; second, there are past instances of successful science in which the supernatural was directly invoked.



By Wellcome

Peter Harrison is an Australian Laureate Fellow and Director of the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities. Before coming to the University of Queensland he was the Idreos Professor of Science and Religion and Director of the Ian Ramsey Centre at the University of Oxford. He has published extensively in the field of intellectual history with a focus on the philosophical, scientific and religious thought of the early modern period, and has a particular interest in historical and contemporary relations between science and religion.



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