

## Science and/or Religion: a 21st Century Debate Research Article

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# Science and/or Miracle? The System Approach to Miracle Events

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**Abstract:** The system approach to the miracle is based on the conviction that the complex issues, requiring the interdisciplinary approach, should be captured in a system way. Thus, the problem of miracle, because of its interdisciplinary character, should be captured in a systemic way, because such approach enables the more adequate and comprehensive presentation of these issues. The system approach towards the epistemology of miracle is the attempt of the more adequate presentation of the relationship between the scientific-natural research and theological stage of recognizing the miracle. Because of using systemic categories, it is possible to present the common foundations (environment) of the system of scientific-natural knowledge and the system of theological interpretation, which can be described as the rationality of knowledge. The result of adopting the systemic epistemology of miracle is noticing the relations between the scientific-natural research and theological interpretation in their system complexity. Determining these relations leads to the more general conclusion that the natural sciences and theology as separate and autonomous systems of gaining the knowledge of reality do not have to be treated as the competing but rather as the complementary ones, with their methodological diversity and limitations in mind.

**Keywords:** miracle, scientific knowledge, theological interpretation, rationality

*“Every miracle can be explained – after the event.  
Not because the miracle is not miracle, but because explanation is explanation”<sup>1</sup>*

## Introduction

The proposal of system approach towards the epistemology of miracle is the consequence of modifying the thesis (commonly present in the literature) of the scientific inexplicability of miraculous event and the question of religious sense of miraculous event. The most important conclusion drawn from it is the statement that the miraculous event has to be the scientifically unexplained one, but it doesn't have to remain the scientifically inexplicable one. This means that in the case of a miraculous event natural sciences cannot provide an explanation of some empirical fact, yet, we should not say that they won't be able to provide such explanation in the future. The consequence of the fact of being unexplained (as now) is describing the event as the extraordinary one. However, this extraordinariness is relativized to the current state of human knowledge of the way the world of nature functions<sup>2</sup>. In turn, in the case of a religious sense of a miraculous event we can characterize the procedure of determining the sense of miraculous event as

1 Rosenzweig, *Jehuda Halevi Poems*, citation from: Cohen, “The Miracle of Miracles”, 75.

2 Cf. Świeżyński, “The Concept of Miracle”, 89-108.

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the interpretation with both the subjective and objective aspect. Thus, it is the humanistic interpretation, having its basis in reality, in the character of the event being examined.

With respect to these conclusions, we may express the conviction that in order for the event to be regarded as the miraculous one, it is necessary to determine two of its properties: (1) the fact of being scientifically unexplained; and (2) the presence of a religious sense. The possibility of attributing both properties to some event in a reasonable way depends on the current state of scientific and theological knowledge. Thus, as far as the event itself is concerned, it should be correlated with human knowledge of the way the nature functions and with the way God acts within the world in relation to the man. In other words, the event, which is to be recognized as the miraculous one, has to be ‘adjusted’ to the current scientific and theological knowledge in the way, which provides the real possibility of regarding it as the one which is unexplained and extraordinary as well as to determine it in its religious sense. Moreover, these two elements, together with the cognitive procedures leading to determining them should not be separated from one another, but they should be interrelated as they constitute the process of recognizing the miracle as a whole. The relation in question requires more detailed characteristics and the system approach presented below is aimed at doing this. The system approach may turn out to be useful in presenting the relations in question more accurately than it is the case with the standing in modern theology, sign and symbolic (semeiotic) conception of miracle<sup>3</sup>. It may also allow to draw further conclusions, which are essential for providing more adequate conception of the miraculous event (as relational-communicational aspect of miracle). Moreover, the epistemology of miracle within the system framework may be understood as the exemplification of the broader and currently extensively discussed question of the relation between natural sciences and theology. The conclusions drawn from the system approach towards epistemology of miracle may, therefore, become useful for suggesting the model of the relation between the natural science and theology, and in a broader sense between science and religion, as well as between the reason and faith.

## The Basic Assumptions of System Epistemology of Miracle

The notion of the system may be characterized by means of the following terms: *element*, *relation*, *totality* and *join*. We may also characterize the system by providing the features of its internal structure, its unique properties and the features concerning its behavior<sup>4</sup>. With the above characteristics of the system in mind, we should examine the epistemology of a miracle, i.e., at the procedure of recognizing it, and then consider the possibility of system approach towards the epistemology of miracle. The starting point for presenting the system epistemology of miracle is presenting the assumptions which underlie it. The most important of these assumptions is the conviction that the miraculous event should, by nature, be potentially possible to be recognizable by a man. From this assumption, there follows the concern for both fundamental stages of recognizing the miraculous event. That is why we should explain what the postulated adjustment of the miracle to human cognitive abilities is.

The miracles which take place within the material world touch the supernatural reality, but they have to be verified with the use of ‘earthly methods’ applied by man. However, it is obvious that both sciences and theology, while examining the event with their respective methods and respective fragments of reality would never be able to say everything about the event labeled the miracle<sup>5</sup>. So the notion of their complementarity is better demonstrated here. Thus, science should present the attitude expressing the awareness of its limitations with respect to the natural events which it seeks to explain. Theology, in turn, which is supposed to affirm the miracle, should take into account the current state of natural knowledge concerning the events taking place.

We must not forget either that the miracle always takes place within the religious context, so it cannot be closed within the scientific laboratory space. It simultaneously has two dimensions: the empirical and

<sup>3</sup> As an example see: Dhanis, “Ou’est-ce”, 201-241; Guardini, “Wunder”; Monden, “Le miracle”; Morales, “El milagro”, 195-220.

<sup>4</sup> See more: Laszlo, “The Systems View”.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Nichols, “Miracles”, 710-714.

non-empirical one. Thus, there cannot be the religious interpretation of the miracle without the appropriate basis in the form of the empirically verifiable fact. Moreover, if we see the miracle as the sign which God uses at a concrete point of space and time in order to motivate the human being to make the internal, salvatory change in himself, as the sign and symbol conception of miracle postulates, or, more broadly speaking, we regard the miraculous event as the instance of communication between God and the man, then, we should assume that the miraculous events are subject to the inculturation process. It means that God's action is always incorporated into the problems and character of a given epoch and of human environment in the way which enables us to read it properly and commonly understand it within the perspective of religious faith. Otherwise, it would be the nonsense one.

Within the sign and symbolic conception of miracle, which I refer to because of its common acceptance within contemporary theology, as well as within the proposed system modification of this conception, we may, therefore, talk about the inculturation of the miraculous event. The agent of this inculturation is God, who gives man (people) the sign of His presence - the message concerning himself and His action in the event, which they regard as the extraordinary one and which turns out to be impossible to explain by scientific knowledge. The miracles of past epochs, i.e., the miraculous character of which we may not see, could easier influence the formation of religious faith in the people of those epochs because the miracles were adjusted to the culture of that time and to the mentality of the people involved. For that reason, God could establish the interpersonal relation with people, which served to realize His salvatory plan. Therefore, it seems that, if it is necessary, this formation is accompanied by the extraordinary events regarded as miracles but they are always adjusted to the needs and capabilities of reading them within a given epoch. In this way, the miracle-sign, the miracle-message avoids the danger of not being recognized and read properly by its recipient. Obviously, the question of interpreting it as the sign of God's revelation remains always as a decision of human free will and of his openness to the transcendence. Yet, the miracle itself, because of its inculturational character, is potentially efficient as the element of the salvatory dialogue between God and the man.

The notion of inculturation, understood in a general way, means gradual blending and adjusting of something or someone into the cultural environment around a given thing or person, as well as the ability to adjust a given system to the conditions prevailing at a given point of space and time<sup>6</sup>. While the lack of the adjustment just mentioned, caused by the conscious action aimed at not adjusting the system to the specific conditions may be described as *non-inculturation*.

As already mentioned, we should assume that the miraculous events ought to be, by nature, possible to recognize by a man, in particular by their participant or indirect observer. Otherwise, the occurrence of miraculous event would be nonsense and serve no purpose at all. Thus, we may talk about the inculturation of miraculous event, the purpose of which is recognizing it by the man as the miracle. However, the inculturation contains in itself also the non-inculturational component. The latter is connected with such adjustment of the miraculous event to the cognitive human capabilities, which involves the impossibility of explaining it within natural sciences, so it can be described as non-adjustment. Thus, within the adjustment (inculturation) of miracle, understood in a general way, there is also a kind of non-adjustment (non-inculturation), which enables a given event, regarded as the extraordinary one from the natural science viewpoint, to be recognized as the miracle within further theological perspective.

Recognizing the miracles is a very complex process in which man with his cognitive faculties plays the crucial role. Yet, this is not the abstract and ideal person, but always a concrete person (or a group of people) who are conditioned by their nature and current environment, in which they live. All those human conditions, i.e., the social, cultural, religious, ones, etc., which are to some extent, variable, have to be taken

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<sup>6</sup> The inculturation is the property of human species and it is also the essential factor of its development. It is adaptational in character. It is sometimes treated as the mechanism of the transmission of culture, within which the cultural heritage is being communicated. The inculturation includes learning all the aspects of culture, ways of expressing feelings and emotions and thoughts. The inculturation is relative, too; namely, it concerns a given cultural system. Religious studies talk about the inculturation, which involves adjusting the liturgy and religious texts to the needs of concrete recipients and also adjusting the way the religious message is being communicated to the mentality and culture of a given community. See more: Shorter, "Toward a Theology".

into account by the agent of miraculous event if we assume that recognizing the miracle is possible, at least potentially possible. Thus, we may say that not all imaginable miraculous events which God could cause would have the property of recognizability. Whether they may be recognized as the miracles determines the degree of their adjustment to the intellectual and perceptive abilities of a concrete person or group of people.

The human condition, which is essential for the process of recognizing the miracle, is the state of one's knowledge of the way the material world functions and the purpose of God's action. The natural sciences and theological knowledge is applicable to the two fundamental stages of recognizing the miraculous event: affirming its extraordinariness as being unexplained and determining its religious sense, respectively. In both stages just mentioned, we may notice different kind of correlation between the miraculous event and human knowledge. In the case of natural knowledge, we should assume that the miraculous event has the non-inculturational character. This means that it is so adjusted to the current knowledge of the way the nature functions that it is impossible to be explained (at least currently) with the use of this knowledge. Thus, this 'adjustment' is, as a matter of fact, some kind of 'non-adjustment' – explaining the event surpasses our cognitive abilities (currently or forever) within the natural science. However, as far as theological knowledge is concerned, the miraculous event is characterized by inculturation, namely, by the precise adjustment to our theological knowledge, possessed at the moment of the event occurrence. Due to this fact, the extraordinary-unexplained event may be recognized within theology as the miraculous one. Thus, in the whole process of recognizing the miraculous event, we should assume the existence of its non-inculturational natural science character and its inculturational theological character.

Both the non-inculturational and inculturational character of a miraculous event may be related to the concrete person, being the participant of miraculous event, as well as to the specific social group, the task of which is to conduct in the detailed and competent investigation of the event in the process of recognizing the miracle. This is the consequence of the structure of the process of recognizing the miracle, the elements of which are asserting the extraordinariness-being unexplained within the casual and scientific knowledge and determining the religious sense of the event in the course of subjectivizing and objectivizing interpretation.

As mentioned above, we should distinguish two levels of natural science non-inculturation: (1) individual level (common, popular knowledge) and (2) social level (scientific knowledge). The individual level concerns the individual persons, who are either direct participants or observers of a given event or phenomenon, while the social level concerns the group of people who investigate a given event as the experts in natural science knowledge.

We have, at the individual level of natural science non-inculturation, characterized by an adjustment of its empirical element to the natural knowledge possessed by particular individuals, that it surpasses this knowledge, i.e., it does not give a chance to explain it within this knowledge. Each man has some, whether more or less precise and adequate, perception of the world and the regularities functioning within it. Thus, everyone, through his popular knowledge, is able to judge whether or not a given event surpasses the scope of his knowledge of nature. If he encounters the event which he is unable to explain with the regularities familiar to him, then he may describe from his individual perspective a given event as the extraordinary one. Thus, if a given event is the miraculous one, the empirical element of which has to be extraordinary, then this extraordinariness has to be primarily discovered in the individual assessment made by its direct participant. Thus, we refer to the individual natural science non-inculturation of miracle, i.e., about the situation in which the empirical element of the miracle is chosen in such a way that it cannot be explained by a given person within the natural (popular science) knowledge available to him. Obviously, different people may have a varied knowledge of the function of the nature, yet, it does not change the postulate that a concrete person should regard a given event as the extraordinary one, because he cannot explain it by referring to his knowledge of the way the nature functions. Any further procedure of recognizing the miracle will not be launched without individual assertion of the extraordinariness of the event; and, consequently, the event cannot be recognized and approved as a miraculous one.

Natural sciences play the specific role in the process of recognizing the miracle. Thus, their representatives deal with the second, social level of natural science non-inculturation of miraculous

event. The extraordinariness judged by the individual person does not have to be consistent with judging a given event as the miraculous one by a natural scientist, who has the advanced knowledge of the way the material world functions. Hence, the natural scientist may question someone's conviction about the extraordinariness of the event providing the explanation within his scientific knowledge, which surpasses the popular one. In this case, the process of recognizing the miracle ends as early as at the stage of natural sciences investigation. If the event is explained by a natural scientist, there is no reason to regard it as a miraculous one and for continuing the recognition process within theology.

However, we should remember that, if we refer to the scientific knowledge, we have a specific state of this knowledge each time. The history of science indicates that the degree of natural knowledge increases continually. The picture of the world proposed by natural science takes into account more and more new scientific discoveries and theories, which seek to explain the way the material reality functions. Thus, if the empirical element of a miraculous event, i.e., the specific natural phenomenon, is to have the property of being unexplained at the level of advanced natural investigation, its occurrence should be adjusted to the current state of knowledge available to the natural scientists community in such a way that it surpasses this knowledge. What is meant here is the knowledge of the world possessed by the experts in particular fields of natural science who are competent to judge the fact of being scientifically unexplained. The empirical element of a miraculous event should, therefore, appear as currently impossible to explain in the light of their knowledge of the regularities of nature formulated as the scientific laws. For that reason, if a given event (natural phenomenon) has a religious context, it focuses on special attention and interest of theologians who investigate and try to explain it within the realm of theology.

Thus, within the natural science non-inculturation, we should assume that God, i.e., the agent of the miraculous event, adjusts the empirical element of miracle, He creates to the current level of human knowledge of the way the world functions. So He brings about the occurrence of such events within the nature, which because of their being unexplained, become the challenge for the human intellect. At first we have the fact of being unexplained by the individual participant or observer of the event (the individual natural science non-inculturation) and then, the fact of being unexplained by natural scientists (experts in natural science knowledge), (the social natural science non-inculturation). The extraordinariness of the event determined in this way may cause the man to reflect more upon it and attract his attention to the possibility of the existence of other kinds of explanation than the natural scientific ones<sup>7</sup>.

The second and decisive stage of recognizing the miracle is done within the realm of theology. It is aimed at judging whether a specific event may be regarded as the manifestation of God's special action, which has its unique religious sense. With respect to this, within the procedure of scientific and theological recognition, we have the confrontation of the event under examination, its religious context and religious value with the theological knowledge of the way and purpose of God's activity. This means that the event being investigated is considered on the background and in relation to theological establishments, which are dogmatic in character, and which follow from the religious revelation and the tradition of religious community<sup>8</sup>.

As an analogy to the natural science non-inculturation, we should distinguish two levels of theological inculturation of miraculous event: the individual and the social one. The former concerns the individual, namely, the person directly involved into the event being considered. The latter concerns the group of people who, because of their theological competence, make the ultimate recognition and approve the event as the miraculous one. The individual theological inculturation refers to the theological knowledge possessed by the individual person, i.e., the participant of the event. A given person is able with his knowledge to judge whether a given event is accompanied by the religious context and whether it has the religious value. If the judgment of both elements just mentioned is positive, we may individually ascertain that a given event has its religious sense. It does not determine, however, the positive end of the procedure of recognizing the miracle, but it gives the chance to continue it at the social level, i.e., by the group of theological experts. If the miraculous event was not inculturated theologically as early as at the individual level, the participant of the

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7 Stempsey, "Miracles and the Limits", 4.

8 Cf.: Carter, "The Recognition", 175-197; Mc Namara, "The Nature", 294-322.

event would not approve of it in its religious sense. That is why, in the individual theological inculturation, we have the adjustment of the event, its religious context and its religious value to the level of theological consciousness of a given person<sup>9</sup>.

Theological inculturation at the social level means in turn that the religious sense of the extraordinary event may be accurately determined by theologians who are competent enough in their field. We should note that as in the case of natural knowledge of the way the world functions, theological knowledge also continues to develop. The work of theologians involves analyzing and deepening the interpretations of theological issues, distinguishing new elements present in religious revelation and clarifying the picture of the relation between God and man. Therefore, the non-empirical element, i.e., the religious value and religious sense of the event should be adjusted to the up-to-date theorems present in theology and to theological expertise possessed by theologians. This adjustment, however, involves something different from the one in natural non-inculturation. In the latter case the adjustment meant surpassing the phenomenon of the natural knowledge needed to explain it which was possessed by a given person. In the former case, however, this meant the possibility of making the event's non-empirical element totally consistent with the current theological knowledge, including the chance of its enrichment. While the history of theology demonstrates that numerous theorems were modified or sometimes even changed radically, the actual state of theological knowledge conditions the process of recognizing the miracle within theological appreciation. Without the adjustment in question, the event would not be recognizable as the one caused by God, the one which has both its religious value and its religious sense. Even if the event was actually the one caused by God, then, as a result of its being inconsistent with theological theorems currently in force, it would have to be rejected as the non-miraculous one. Thus, we should assume that God, as the agent of the miracle, uses in His action the current religious context and provides the event its religious value, which, within the perspective of theological recognition, will be able to be regarded as a genuine reason for ascertaining the occurrence of miraculous event due to determining its religious sense. In this way the potential capability of theological recognition of the miraculous event is guaranteed, although it does not eliminate the possibility of the wrong assessment of the event and of ignoring the miracle.

## The Main Characteristics of the System Epistemology of Miracle

After presenting the most important assumptions made in the system epistemology of miracle, we should characterize it in greater detail. This characteristic refers to the properties typical of each system, i.e., the elementary, relational and holistic character as well as having its environment and the presence of joins within the system itself and between systems. We may prove that the general properties of system mentioned above are also present in the case of system epistemology of miracle. For this purpose, we have to assign the specific elements of system epistemology of miraculous events to the general properties of system, inserting it in the appropriate way into the whole of system approach. Therefore, the traditional approach towards epistemology of miracle will be transformed into the system one, which will eventually enable one to present the broader perspective of recognizing miraculous events and its consequences.

Recognizing a given event as the miraculous one may be treated as obtaining the knowledge about this event. Knowledge, in turn, is described as the state of cognition, whether more or less integrated<sup>10</sup>. Arriving at the specific state of knowledge concerning miraculous event is possible because of two main stages of recognizing miraculous event: the scientific and theological one. These are the very stages which may be considered within the perspective of system approach towards the epistemology of miracle. This means the natural scientific knowledge and theological interpretation are two distinct approaches but they are not isolated systems for obtaining the knowledge of a miraculous event.

As far as scientific knowledge is concerned, we may point to its essential element, i.e., the object of this knowledge, i.e., the nature with its measurable structures. There are also some other elements, one of

<sup>9</sup> Shooman, "The Metaphysics", 15-29.

<sup>10</sup> Aune, "An Empiricist Theory", 1-22.

which involves fundamental philosophical assumptions. The most important among these assumptions are: (1) the conviction that the phenomena and processes taking place within the material world may be explained by the operation of the natural intra-world causes which are homogeneous in character; (2) the conviction that on the basis of permanent operation of the causes just mentioned, we may establish the regularities of nature and formulate the scientific laws which allow us to determine the way cause-effect relations function. The essential element of natural scientific knowledge is also the empirical method of examination, characteristic of natural science.

The whole realm of the scientific knowledge system is characterized by the fact that natural sciences seek not only to describe the phenomena being examined but also to determine the regularities of their occurrence, i.e., the relations between the phenomena. This process is performed with the use of various investigative operations, the essential of which are the empirical method involving observation and experiment as well as theoretical interpretation of the data obtained. Thus, we should say that the system of natural scientific knowledge consists of both empirical knowledge and theoretical elements. These elements are related to one another in various ways and the special role is played here by the feedback taking place between them. It involves the reverse impact of scientific theories on the empirical investigation. The formulated theories are the essential determinants of the way and purpose of making observations and organizing experiments. The results of empirical data, in turn, are compiled and interpreted within the framework of particular theories and they contribute either to strengthening, clarifying and developing them or to modifying, questioning and sometimes even rejecting them and replacing them with the new theories.

In the context of recognizing miraculous events, natural scientific knowledge enables one to correct the inappropriate picture of the material world, which is the main point of reference in all the attempts to explicate extraordinary events. The effects of scientific knowledge allow us to build up the scientific and natural picture of the natural event in relation to which a given event is judged as either the ordinary or extraordinary one. Thus, natural sciences participate in recognizing the external surface of the miraculous event as the extraordinary one, i.e., in recognizing the empirical aspect of a miracle, which is currently impossible to explain. Thus, the system of natural scientific knowledge together with the philosophy of science turns out to be helpful in correcting the inappropriate definitions of miracle (e.g., ‘violating the laws of nature’, ‘scientific inexplicability of the event’). It also enables one to establish the current way of understanding the regularities of nature and scientific laws and, hence to qualify the examined events as either scientifically explained or unexplained. Sometimes the analogy between the nature of discoveries made within natural sciences and their philosophical implications and the structure of theological notion of miracle is introduced<sup>11</sup>.

Thus, the system of natural scientific knowledge may be described as the one which is open to other systems of obtaining the knowledge about the world in the sense that the establishments made within natural science are of some significance for them. The scientific knowledge, not losing its autonomy and remaining the distinct system of knowledge, is simultaneously related to other systems, with which it is joined with the external inputs and outputs. The primary cause of this state of affairs is the fact that each system of obtaining the knowledge is constituted by man with his cognitive abilities. In the case of recognizing miraculous events, the necessity of taking into account the relations between the system of natural scientific knowledge and the system of theological knowledge brings the necessity of treating the scientific knowledge and theological interpretation in the system way, i.e., as the sub-systems of the superior system, which is the whole of human knowledge.

Likewise, the theological interpretation understood to be a system has to be considered in the light of understanding the unique character of theology itself. The object of interest of this discipline does not confine its activity to science as to strictly scientific arguments. Theology is based on the paradox of combining knowledge with religious faith. Theological knowledge consists of the knowledge through faith, learned knowledge and wisdom knowledge. That is why some scholars suggest talking about theology as a science in an analogical sense. However, theology is not a science in the unambiguous sense, so we should not question its academic character, for it can be treated as the instrument of obtaining knowledge about reality.

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11 Dolch, “Theologie und Physik”, 98-101.

The components of theological knowledge mentioned above are also the basic elements of the system of theological interpretation in the case of recognizing miraculous events. Thus, in the case of recognizing miraculous events, the theological interpretation captured in a system way should be understood as the specific relation between the element of an individual's existential experience, the religious faith and the intellectual reflection upon the elements of religious revelation. Thus, we may say that theological interpretation is the activity which also requires the intellectual precision accompanied by an attitude of religious faith and at the same time that of rational criticism.

Moreover, as far as recognizing miraculous events is concerned, the system of theological interpretation is open to information derived from the system of natural scientific knowledge, which is the very element conditioning launching (or not) the system of theological interpretation. The basis for the flow of information and for cooperation of the two systems of obtaining the knowledge of miraculous event is the fact that both systems form the structures, which are subordinate to the whole of the system of obtaining, by a man, the knowledge of the reality experienced. Thus, it seems that both in the case of scientific knowledge and theological interpretation of the event, we have the scientific (learned) procedure for obtaining the knowledge of the specific event. This conclusion seems to be consistent with the system approach towards science in general understood as the holistic, self-organizing system, the development of which is directed by the streams of information.

The environment of the system may be described as everything which is beyond the system. Thus, it may be understood as the part of reality with which the system enters (or may enter) into some relationships. If we consider any system, we always may talk about its environment. Similarly, if we have experienced any environment, it is always the environment of the concrete system.

In the case of the system approach towards epistemology of a miraculous event, defining the environment of the natural scientific knowledge and theological interpretation systems seems to be very important. Because the two systems of obtaining the knowledge of miraculous event are the component elements of the holistic system of human knowledge, they should be situated within the area of human activity involving the intentional reception of the object being known by the knowing subject, together with attributing to the object the new (intentional) way of existing in the human mind. This area is characterized by the fact that the cognitive processes, which proceed in it, have to satisfy the specific criteria, among which the rationality is usually regarded as the primary one.

The rationality is described in various ways. Yet, the main distinction among the definitions of rationality is conditioned by relating it either to a human being or to human knowledge. As far as the rationality of being is concerned, it is usually regarded as the property of being, which involves the fact that in all respects (or at least in some respects) it has the reason for its existence and for that, which it is. The rationality of knowledge, however, is the property of knowledge, due to which it is the information on some object and remains intersubjectively communicable and verifiable in terms of its value. From a human person's perspective, we may say that the rationality follows from human reasonability, i.e. his openness to receive the cognitive content and to know the causes or properties of that which is considered (comprehending the relations between beings, phenomena, objects, etc.).

One of the strongest human intellectual desires connected with the rationality of knowledge is the desire to obtain the total (absolute) cognitive certainty. We can sometimes draw from the considerations of seeking the cognitive certainty the conclusion that the genuinely radical search for certainty always ends with the statement that the certainty is available only in immanence that the perfect clarity of the object may be found only when the object and the subject become identical. The identification seems, in practice, an ambitious task, possible to be realized only in 'mystical' experience, but it does not necessarily have to lead to minimizing one's cognitive efforts and to confining it to the empirical and mathematical rationality. In human thought history this type of rationality expressed the tendency to base everything on the evidence and experimental verification. However, the boundaries of the rationality in the broader sense are not identical with those of the empirical method. The rationality cannot be reduced to manipulating the empirical and formal implications. Nevertheless, each form of rationality has to obey certain rules, without which it may easily become the irrationality. These rules are, e.g., seeking the clarity and informativeness in

formulating the judgments and statements within the language boundaries, openness to discussions with others, self-criticism, critical considerations of other options, internal consistency of views, consistency of thinking and, finally, the consciousness of language limitations and of other conditions of one's own views.

The problem of recognizability of miraculous events, because of the impossibility of obtaining the holistic knowledge about them in just the empirical way, is sometimes treated as situated beyond the scope of human rationality. Thus, there arises the doubt whether we can talk about the miracles in a rational way and, if so, what kind of rationality is appropriate for recognizing the miracle. The system approach towards the epistemology of miracle allows us not only to distinguish the two systems of obtaining the knowledge of miraculous event, but it also requires indicating the rational environment, in which they function.

It seems that the starting point for the search for the explanations of phenomena is the cognitive need which is natural for a human being, and which manifests itself in the desire of possessing the adequately justified theorems concerning the way nature functions. Nowadays, it is being satisfied through scientific activity including various fields of knowledge. Yet, in the face of the events which remain unexplained by particular sciences, human cognitive desires do not cease for they direct a human being towards looking for the ways of explaining the events other than the natural ones. The cognitive process, leading to the recognition of a miraculous event is the example of such a desire. Its driving force is the desire to satisfy one's curiosity and to obtain the satisfactory answers to the questions asked in the face of the visible reality. Realizing the limitations of one investigation method is the starting point to search for other ways of explaining the facts which took place; their methodological distinctness, exceeding the empirical knowledge, does not eliminate the human desire to obtain such answers to the questions asked by him, answers that will turn out to be satisfactory in the light of the criteria adopted.

We may see in the process of recognizing the miraculous event the human desire mentioned above which manifests itself in scientific knowledge and theological interpretation. Both systems of obtaining the knowledge of miraculous events function as arising from the rationality of the existence of the material reality and of man himself. Therefore, accepting the rationality of being leads to the conviction concerning the rationality of knowledge of this being, i.e., the possibility of obtaining the valuable information about it<sup>12</sup>. Therefore, we may assume that the common environment of the systems for obtaining knowledge about miraculous event is the rationality of human knowledge. Due to its impact on individual systems of obtaining knowledge, we may observe in each of them the cognitive processes, characterized by a certain similarity, despite the fact that they maintain their intra-system uniqueness.

Such a similarity may be most clearly visible when the systems enter into the relation between each other and the flow of information between them takes place. The factor directing this flow is the person, in relation to whom the two systems play the ancillary role as the cognitive instruments in the broad sense. The information from the system of natural scientific knowledge (the impossibility to explain the event) is used in the system of theological interpretation (seeking to determine the religious sense of the event). Thus, the switch from the system of scientific knowledge to the one of theological interpretation takes place, but the main idea of the whole cognitive process aimed at finding the adequate explanation of a given fact remains unchanged.

The distinctiveness of the two systems makes a natural scientist ignore, for methodological reasons, a non-empirical factor while he searches for a natural factor, willing to explain a given extraordinary phenomenon. Within the framework of mathematical and empirical rationality, this attitude is fully reasonable. However, if we see and take into account the religious circumstances of such an event, there are the reasons for asserting that the side factor could be God's action. Therefore, the conditional character of scientific laws following from introducing the side factor not taken into account in the law formula, allows us to outline the way of rational recognition of miracle. If a natural scientist ascertains the exception from the scientific law and is then willing to save this law, he has to look for the natural side factor responsible for the emergence of this exception. If the event has its religious context, a theologian is also entitled to search for the non-natural side factor. Each of them, within the framework of his own rationality of knowledge determined by the cognitive method and characteristic of his field of knowledge, may make an

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12 Schoen, "Religious Explanations", 139-143.

effort to explain the event. If the natural scientist does not find any natural side factor and if the theologian ascertains the existence of the non-natural side factor, we may talk about the emergence of miracle. Thus, both the scientific and theological theory play within the system epistemology of miracle their specific role, respectively. The introductory stage is the attempt to explain the phenomenon using the familiar natural regularities, while the final conclusion concerning the emergence of a miracle belongs to theology, which starts from the religious premises, analyzes the event within the rationality of religious faith. That is why the recognition of miracle should be situated at the two parallel levels, for which the common environment is the rationality.

The question of the possibility for recognizing the miracle in a rational way depends to a great extent, on the conception of rationality adopted at the outset. If we understand rationality as just the human capability of the empirical and rational quest for the causes and regularities of phenomena, then we should say that it is possible to know rationally only the empirical aspect of miracle (i.e., attempt to explain the extraordinary phenomenon through referring to natural side factor). However, it is impossible to recognize the miracle in this way because, either the natural side factor is identified and hence the natural scientist finds the explanation of the phenomenon, or this very factor remains unknown, which does not entitle us to talk about the miracle. While the full recognition of miracle, i.e., comprehending the existential and religious sense of the fact, together with its religious context, requires the attitude of rationality in the broader sense. A man is a rational being, not only when he justifies the theses, and proves the theorems and verifies suppositions, but also when, on the basis of certain reasons, he trusts the other person and takes the attitude of faith (in this case we mean the person of God in particular).

This means, in practice, that the 'procedure' of recognizing the miracle consists of a few stages, each of which belongs to the sphere of rationality and engages his various cognitive faculties. Within such framework, we may talk about the scientific recognition of miracle and the term 'scientific' refers to both natural sciences and theology preserving their methodological distinctness. If the recognition of miracle is to be efficient and deserve the name of critical knowledge, which is one of the conditions of rationality, it should analyze all the elements of the structure of a miraculous event. Thus, historical sciences, natural sciences, philosophy and theology should take part in this complex process in accordance with their competences.

Taking into account the above suggestions, we may propose the definition of miraculous event, containing in it the components, which correspond to the elements of the process of rational recognition of miracle. Therefore, the miracle is the event, the historical fact, which, at least at the moment of its emergence and examination, turns out to be impossible to explain within the established scientific laws, and which, due to its religious context and value, may be regarded as God's message communicated to man. In this way, the epistemology of the event (ascertaining the emergence of extraordinary-scientifically unexplained event and determining its religious sense) is connected with the description of the structure of miracle. The main elements of the structure of miracle are: (1) historically verified empirical fact, which for its explanation requires the operation of side factor; (2) the religious context and value of the empirical fact, determined on the basis of religious criteria.

However, we may wonder whether the proposed 'rationality of faith', necessary in the process of recognizing the miracle, is not the return to Descartes' epistemological paradigm, which situates the whole action of searching for the certainty in the mind of an individual man? Then, are we not in the danger of seeing the miracle in everything which happens? The faith is always a subjective decision and choice, i.e., it takes place in its subject. However, in the case of recognizing the miracle, it moves (or at least it should move) us towards participation in the intersubjective faith. According to Popper's 'third world' of knowledge in which the subject also participates by 'consuming' its content, we may point to the 'third world' of faith, where the establishments of theology and its auxiliary sciences following from the rational analysis of the revelation, become the source of information necessary to continue one's own process in the quest for the truth<sup>13</sup>. Thus, recognizing the miracle in a specific event may be reduced to a kind of decision-choice and to

<sup>13</sup> As an analogy to Popper's proposal, the 'first world' would be the world of the spiritual objects or processes, the 'second', in turn would be the world of states of human consciousness and the content of human mind concerning God and His activity (the subjective knowledge of particular people following from their religious experience). Popper, "Objective Knowledge".

implementing the specific form of rationality. However, it is not the isolated choice, made merely on one's own, but rather it is made with the use of the theological 'background', which is the effect of the rational interpretation of the religious revelation.

We may agree with the statement that approving some extraordinary event such as the miracle, is a question of the appropriate interpretation of this event. However, it is not the irrational interpretation, namely, the arbitrary one, which is based on the purely subjective conviction, which does not have any objective justification. Rather, it is the result of ascertaining the religious context accompanying a given extraordinary scientifically unexplained event. Confining ourselves to asserting the fact that a given extraordinary event is currently unexplained in the light of natural science laws now in force, we may postulate rationally the approval of the presence of miracle if we manage to determine the religious context and then the religious value and in effect the religious sense of a given event. We cannot know whether the miracle actually happened just on the basis of empirical knowledge; we may only believe in it on the basis of certain premises. But interpreting a given event may be regarded as a rational action if it is performed due to religious premises which serve as the element expanding the narrow conception of empirical rationality, rather than a purely irrational element. Furthermore, the disposition of good that will open one to the supernatural reality does not necessarily have to mean the full affirmation of this reality, but merely the positive open human attitude towards this reality. The critical reason, while thoroughly analyzing the structure of a human being may also prove, or at least suppose, the openness of human existence to the whole reality, especially to the personal one as well as to its transcendence. This attitude is equivalent to opening discussions with other people, to self-criticism, to critical consideration of other options, to the awareness of the conditions of one's own views, i.e., considering the postulates presented earlier and including the explication of the necessary properties of rationality of knowledge.

The rationality seen as the environment of the systems for obtaining the knowledge of miraculous events may also be described as the 'field of human rationality', which permeates human cognitive activity similar to the electromagnetic field present in the material world. In the context of the rationality in the narrow sense, the miraculous event appears seemingly as the departure from it. We have the analogical situation of 'departure' when we move away from the considerations of the sense of the universe towards reflecting upon the sense of human life. Then, the matter gets much more complicated, many events acquire the new sense, particularly when combined with human ignorance and their free, often irrational choices.

Then the question is: how does one incorporate all that into the field of rationality? Could we not imagine that, similar to the rationality of the world, there exist some 'gaps' which are left for the operation of incident? Moreover, are there not some 'gaps' in human experience, for the operation of free will and its irrational decisions? Could we not assume that these 'gaps' are incorporated into the structure of the totality, that they don't ruin its rationality, but are even its conditions? If we accept this conception, then, human tragedies and the existence of evil no longer are the arguments for the lack of sense, but they may be described as the mystery of rationality.

The question of the rationality or irrationality of miraculous events and of the possibility of knowing them in a rational way may be judged in a similar way. They are the mysteries to a great extent, as we are unable to incorporate their emergence into the network of the implications fully accessible to our human reason. However, it is because of the mystery of the rationality itself and the existence of this mystery that we are not doomed to nonsense. The acceptance of this mystery doesn't have to mean the betrayal of rationality. This is simply the agreement to something which we do not understand fully. If we fail to accept it, then the field of rationality gets narrowed down to the rationality of reasoning and, potentially, to the rationality of the world. Thus, only the rationality supplemented with the attitude of openness to the religious faith being the expression of human rationality, allows for the ascertainment of the emergence of miracle. And the faith involves also the use of human reason. We believe not because we have the irrefutable evidence, but because we see this attitude as a valuable one.

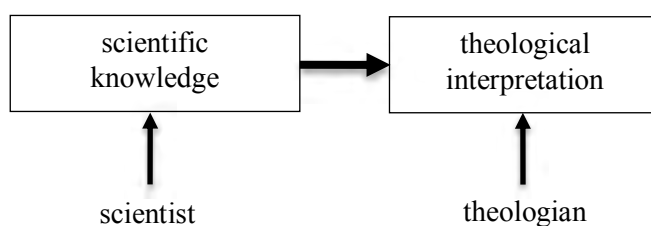
## The Consequences of the System Approach Towards the Epistemology of Miracle

If the systems are interrelated, we can discuss the joins taking place between them. It is claimed that the join between two given systems takes place, when at least one external output of the first system serves, directly or indirectly, as the external input of the second system. We also distinguish the three basic types of joins: (1) series joins, (2) parallel joins, (3) feedbacks. Moreover, we will discuss the special case of feedback, i.e., self-join.

The relations between systems, described as the joins, should be taken into account within the system approach towards the epistemology of miracle. As if it distinguishes the two primary systems of obtaining the knowledge of a miraculous event (the natural scientific knowledge and theological interpretation), then the result of their operation in the case of recognizing miraculous event is the occurrence of the specific system joins between them. Taking a closer look at them and determining their character will allow us to comprehend the nature of the system epistemology of miracle, for presenting it in an adequate way and for indicating the consequences arising from such approach to the issue being discussed.

The series join between systems takes place, when at least one external output of the first system acts as the external input of the second system. Simultaneously, the trajectory of the first system's output becomes identical with the trajectory of the second system's input. The parallel join between two systems is when there exists a the third system, described as the auxiliary one, in which has a series join with both the first and the second system. We should note that the parallel join of two systems has the property of being symmetrical. It means that, if the first system is connected in a parallel way with the second system, the second system is also connected in the parallel way with the first one.

In the semeiotic conception of miracle being currently elaborated on within fundamental theology (apologetic theology), the miracle is recognized in the two consecutive stages: first, ascertaining the fact that a given event is unexplained in a natural scientific way and second, interpreting this event in a theological way, which is aimed at determining the religious sense of this event<sup>14</sup>. Thus, we may say that the system of natural scientific knowledge and the one of theological interpretation are connected in a series way, because the external output of the system of natural scientific knowledge becomes the external input of the system of theological interpretation of the event. This is, because the determination within natural science that a given event is scientifically unexplained, may initiate the process of searching for the religious sense of this event within theology.



**Figure 1:** Series structure of the epistemology of miracle (semeiotic conception)

However, we have to remember that we should take into account the existence of two sub-systems, both in the natural scientific knowledge system and in the theological interpretation system. We have in both systems the popular (common) and scientific knowledge, which provide the basis for distinguishing the sub-systems of individual and social knowledge, as well as the sub-systems of theological interpretation: individual and social one. Thus, we may distinguish four systems of obtaining the knowledge of miraculous event, among which the specific joins exist.

The series join occurs first between the sub-system of natural ordinary knowledge and the sub-system of natural scientific knowledge. The initial stage of the process of recognizing the miracle is the conviction,

<sup>14</sup> Borasi, "Un'analisi", 375-395.

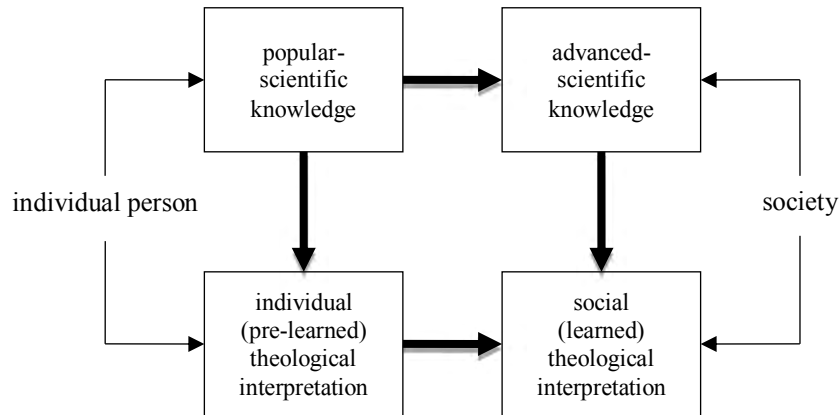
on the part of the direct participant of the event, that the event is extraordinary, namely, impossible to explain in the light of his knowledge. Such a conviction becomes the external output of the sub-system of natural popular knowledge and, simultaneously, it becomes the external input of the sub-system of natural-scientific knowledge. In the course of the operation of the natural-scientific knowledge system this conviction is subject to verification in accordance with the methodology of natural science and with the use of scientific knowledge, natural scientists currently possess.

The situation is similar in the case of the sub-system of theological interpretation. First, the direct participant of the miracle has to determine the existence of religious sense of the event; he has to do so through individual theological interpretation. Subsequently, his establishment is verified by theologian-experts in the process of theological social interpretation. In this situation, the ascertainment by an individual person of the existence of the religious sense of a given event becomes the external output of the sub-system of theological individual interpretation and, at the same time, it becomes the external input of the sub-system of theological social interpretation. In this way, the condition of the presence of series join between the two sub-systems is satisfied.

Distinguishing the sub-system pairs within the system of natural scientific knowledge and the one of theological interpretation causes us to reflect upon the relation between the system of natural scientific knowledge and the system of theological interpretation. It seems that this relation is more complex than it follows from e.g. the semeiotic conception of miracle. The character of this relation should therefore be defined again.

First of all, we should note that the existence of the four sub-systems mentioned permits additional relations to exist between them. These relations are the joins taking place between the sub-system of popular (common) scientific knowledge and the sub-system of individual theological interpretation, as well as the ones between the sub-system of natural-scientific knowledge and the sub-system of social theological interpretation. They have the characteristic of parallel joins and, together with the series joins taking place between the popular-scientific knowledge and advanced-scientific knowledge, as well as those taking place between the individual theological interpretation and the social theological interpretation constitute the mixed, series-parallel structure of the system epistemology of miracle.

Within such structure of the system epistemology of miracle the process of its recognition proceeds simultaneously in two ways: (1) from the natural popular-scientific knowledge through the natural advanced-scientific knowledge to social theological interpretation, and (2) from natural popular-scientific knowledge through the individual theological interpretation to social theological interpretation. Both ways share its starting point and its final point, yet,; they maintain their distinctiveness, because of different intermediate stages. Therefore, there is no direct move from ascertaining the extraordinariness of the event within the natural popular-scientific knowledge to approving a given event as the miracle within the social theological interpretation. First, it is required to approve the religious sense of the event within the individual theological interpretation and approving it as the unexplained one within the natural science. This conclusion seems essential, as it leads to the claim that the correct procedure of approving the event as the miracle takes into account the establishments of natural sciences on the one hand and the individual theological experience on the other. However, the cognitive orders of natural sciences and of theology are not mixed because the direct contact between them exists in the individual, popular-scientific explanation of the event and in the scientific attempt to explain the event and not between that which is popular-scientific in natural knowledge, that which is learned in theological knowledge, as well as not between that which is scientific in natural knowledge and that which is pre-learned in theological knowledge. In this way, the multidimensional character of a miraculous event is taken into account and protected, as well as the interdisciplinary character of the procedure of its recognition, together with the subjective-objective order of conducting this procedure.



**Figure 2:** Series-parallel structure of the system epistemology of miracle

We refer to the feedback between two systems, when at least one external output of the first system is at the same time the external input of the second system and when at least one external output of the second system is at the same time the external input of the first system. The special case of feedback is the self-join. It involves the situation, in which the system both receives the action from itself and exerts the action on itself.

Examining the relationships between particular sub-systems of natural scientific knowledge and the sub-systems of theological interpretation, we should note that there occurs feedback between them. Within the system of natural scientific knowledge we have the reverse impact of the sub-system of natural scientific (advanced) knowledge on the sub-system of natural popular-scientific knowledge. This means that the establishments made within the natural-scientific knowledge have the reverse impact on the natural popular-scientific knowledge. If a natural scientist ascertains the possibility of explaining some phenomenon and provides its explanation, it is the information, which, in a reverse way, affects the consciousness of the person, who observed the phenomenon and who was unable to explain it within his natural popular knowledge. This information causes the observer to accept the fact although the phenomenon initially seemed to him impossible to explain, it has the status of the explained one, due to the information, the natural scientist provided. For that reason, an ordinary observer has no reason to regard it as unexplained or even inexplicable. Analogically, if a natural scientist is unable to explain some event and he says that it is currently unexplained, this is the information affecting in a reverse way the observer, who examines the event within his popular knowledge. This time, however, his conviction as to the impossibility for explaining the event is confirmed and maintained by the natural scientist. It is obvious that in both cases there exists both the feedback between the sub-system of natural scientific knowledge and the sub-system of natural popular-scientific knowledge, as the information flowing from the former sub-system affects, in a reverse way, the latter sub-system.

The situation is similar to the feedback between the sub-system of theological social (learned) interpretation and the sub-system of theological individual (pre-learned) interpretation. The sub-system of social theological interpretation affects, in a reverse way, the sub-system of individual theological interpretation. This is because the establishments made within the sub-system of social theological interpretation are of great importance for the establishments made within the sub-system of individual theological interpretation. If theological experts confirm or negate the religious sense of a given event, and hence the occurrence of miracle, then this information affects, in a reverse way, the theological consciousness of the person(s), who, within their individual theological interpretation, ascertained the religious sense of the event. This information affects also their further assessment of this event. The information about the confirmation of the religious sense of a given event strengthens the individual interpreter's conviction about the accurateness of his establishments concerning the miraculousness of the fact which emerged. However, in the situation of negating the religious sense of a given event, the individual interpreter, in the face of theologian-experts' establishment, should modify his conviction about the religious sense of the

event which was not confirmed by the experts; and he should resign from regarding a given event as the miraculous one.

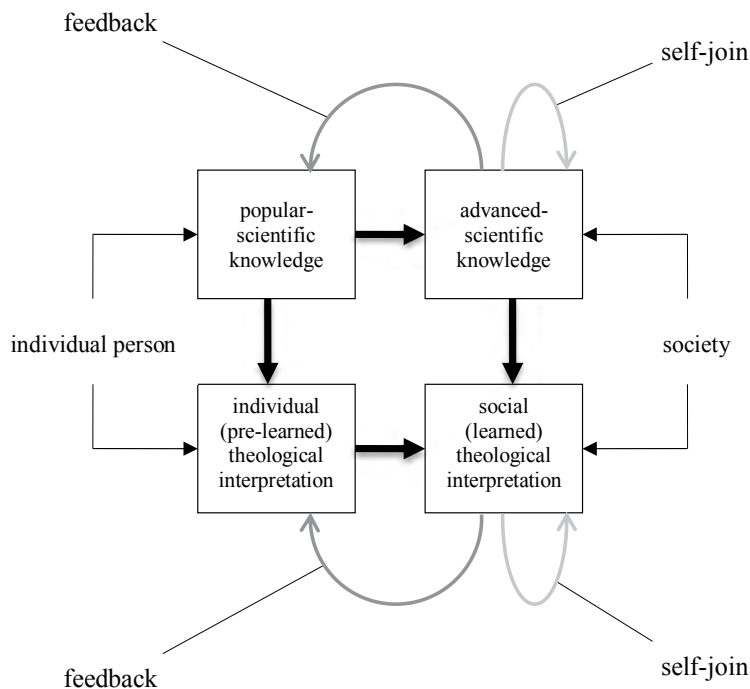
Thus, the process of recognizing the miracle contains two feedbacks which occur between the sub-systems of natural scientific knowledge and between the sub-systems of theological interpretation. However, we should emphasize here that there is no feedback between the system of natural knowledge and the system of theological interpretation, as the traditional approach towards recognizing the miracle seems to suggest. Within the traditional framework which the sign and symbolic conception of miraculous events seems to share, approving a given event by theologian as the one which is unexplained in a natural way, causes a natural scientist to lose, in the opinion of theologians, any possibility of explaining the event within his competence. A theologian, approving the event as the miraculous one, informs the natural scientist that his further search for its explanation are doomed to fail because the miraculous event, by its very nature, can never be adequately explained within the realm of natural science. In this way, the feedback between theological interpretation and natural scientific knowledge is established; this feedback makes theological judgments influence directly the scientific establishments concerning the unexplained events. However, accepting the existence of real distinctiveness of the cognitive fields and methodologies used in natural sciences and in theology, we should say that this feedback established between the theological interpretation of the event and the attempts to explain it in a scientific way is the invalid one. Within the system epistemology of miracle, we can discuss the feedback only inside the system of natural scientific knowledge and inside the system of theological interpretation where they take place between their sub-systems. The system of theological interpretation does not affect in a reverse way the system of scientific knowledge, as there is no valid reason for approving such a relation. On the contrary, we should state that each of the two systems is autonomous in the sense that the process of ascertaining the fact that a given event is scientifically unexplained and the process of recognizing this event as the miraculous one proceeds simultaneously through two channels: the natural scientific and theological one. Final theological establishments, whether asserting the presence of a miracle or negating it, do not influence the assessment of this event within natural science. A natural scientist, within his methodology, may (or even should) continue looking for the explanation of the event which emerged and which he is currently unable to explain. The theological establishments should, by no means influence his activity, let alone constraining, blocking or stopping it. In this way, the system epistemology of miracle opts for establishing the relationships between the natural sciences and theology in a way which allows for preserving their autonomous character, but at the same time allowing a chance of cooperation between them.

The situation is similar with the reverse impact of the natural-scientific establishments on the theological ones. It is sometimes claimed that if a natural scientist is initially unable to explain a given event, or finds its explanation, he does so after recognizing the event as the miracle by a theologian, then, on the basis of feedback, the natural explanation is the reason for questioning the miraculous character of the event. It could mean that a natural scientist claims a right to refute the theological establishments with the methodology of natural science, however, it is difficult to accept the existence of the join just mentioned within system epistemology of miracle, because the establishments made within the theological social interpretation do not require any further verification by referring to the subsequent natural scientists' establishments. Although theological interpretation uses the scientific-natural establishments concerning the event under examination, it does not mean that this interpretation will be changed depending on further natural scientists' establishments. The concept of inculturation of a miraculous event applies here; it requires the miraculous event to be unexplained at the moment of its emergence and then to be examined within the realm of theology. Potential new establishments taking place after the end of theological procedure of recognizing the miracle do not influence the theological interpretation of the event, as the miraculous event takes place 'here and now' and it involves the concrete human person in his current existential situation. Thus, we may say that the miraculous event 'is accomplished' at the moment of positive finish of theological interpretation procedure and it does not require using the establishments of natural sciences again. In this way, the authority of theology is not questioned by natural science and the possibility of further cooperation between the two fields of knowledge is maintained in the case of the emergence of other extraordinary events - potentially miraculous ones.

We should still mention the special case of feedback, i.e., the self-join as it also exists within the system epistemology of miracle. Self-join occurs in both the system of natural scientific knowledge and the one of theological interpretation. Within the former system, it concerns the sub-system of natural-scientific knowledge, while, within the latter, it concerns the sub-system of theological social interpretation.

The self-join taking place within the sub-system of natural scientific knowledge involves the reverse impact of the natural scientists' establishments concerning the phenomena and events being examined on their further examination and shaping the scientific picture of the material world. The natural scientist who encounters some difficulties in explaining a given event and hence is forced to regard it as currently unexplained, usually strengthens in himself the desire to find the adequate explanation. The cognitive problem, he encounters, becomes for him the inspiration for conducting further searches and for examining the nature. It seems that even if the natural scientist is temporarily discouraged because of the difficulties connected with finding an adequate explanation of the natural fact, he does not have to give up and resign from seeking to find it. Thus, the ascertainment of the fact of being scientifically unexplained influences in a reverse way the sub-system of natural scientific knowledge and intensifies the examination effort hoping to find the explanation in the future. Also, if the natural scientist manages to provide the adequate explanation of the facts being examined, we may talk about the self-join within the sub-system of natural scientific knowledge, as due to this, he obtains the enriched and modified picture of the world. The knowledge of the way the world functions contributes to supplementing the system of natural scientific knowledge and often provides new examination opportunities.

We can also discuss the self-join within the sub-system of theological social interpretation. The results of theological investigation concerning a given event influence in a reverse way the current state and development of theological (learned) knowledge. If a given event is recognized as a miraculous one, this may be helpful in investigating other, potentially miraculous events; it may also cause the deeper interpretation of theological theorems, as it provides the more thorough knowledge of God's activity within the world and of the way He realizes His salvatory plans concerning a man. In turn, the negative theological opinion, rejecting the claim on the miraculousness of a given event also influences the system of theological knowledge. It, in turn, influences theology, providing it with the knowledge of that which is not God's miraculous action and, hence, it may contribute to purifying the system of theological knowledge of the wrong interpretations of facts.



**Figure 3:** Feedbacks and self-joins in the system epistemology of miracle

## Conclusion

It is difficult to suspect that Albert Einstein, who because of his distanced attitude towards religion, was convinced that miraculous events were possible. But he probably said the following: “There are two ways of living one’s life. The first one is to live as if nothing was the miracle. The second, in turn, is to live as if everything was the miracle”<sup>15</sup>. This somewhat poetical statement by a world famous physicist demonstrates that even if someone is skeptical about the miracles in their religious sense, because of his views, does not mean that he is deprived of the sensitivity to the ‘miraculousness’ visible in the world around him. Moreover, he consciously may seek to shape his existence in the way which would allow him to maintain his openness to that, which surprises, astonishes, delights and puzzles. Thus, the problem of miracle in its broad sense seems to extend between two aspects of human activity: life experience (one’s own and that of other people) and the reflection upon it. In the case of a miraculous event, the latter aspect of human involvement is accessible not just for those who are convinced that they experienced the miracle, but who merely want to put in order and clarify their understanding of miracles, both because of themselves and because of other people.

The system approach towards epistemology of miracle allows us to understand better the relations between the stages of scientific knowledge and theological interpretation within the process for recognizing the miracle. These relations, taking place in the form of connections both within and inside the systems of scientific knowledge and of theological interpretation indicate the possibility of seeing them in a complementary way as the necessary elements of the procedure of recognizing the miracle. Their common environment which may be the rationality of human knowledge understood in an appropriate way, enables understanding the miraculous event as the one which requires for its explanation and understanding, taking into account both systems for obtaining the knowledge of the reality without overstepping the authority of either of them. The system approach towards the epistemology of miracle was proposed in the opinion that it is the more adequate way of presenting the unique character of a miraculous event, and that it enables its more detailed description.

In summary of all the analyses discussed in this presentation, we should achieve some general conclusions concerning the epistemology of a miraculous event.

In the first place, it is the need to place the discussion of miracles within the broader context of the relations between natural sciences and theology and between reason and faith. The space where these two fields of knowledge and human attitudes meet is philosophy, which allows one to put in order the complex and multidimensional issues concerning the miracle. Philosophy also allows one to make the necessary distinctions and to analyze the theorems which are the components of the notion of a miracle. Thus, it seems that epistemology of miracle and its establishments understood in this way should be of a necessary help in the quest for the adequately understanding miraculous events.

The second conclusion concerns the postulate of multidimensional investigation of the problem of miracle and searching for the concept of a miraculous event, while being aware of the cognitive limitations present in each of the ways of considering this problem. Attempting to consider the miracles with the use of human reason and referring to the order of religious faith only when they are impossible to be interpreted in accordance with the natural order, is the strategy which is reflected in the contemporary procedure of investigating miraculous events. The scheme of recognizing the miracle involves first the stage connected with the scientific-natural investigation of the phenomenon and then searching for its religious sense. The methodology of constructing the concept of a miraculous event and hence the methodology of philosophy of a miracle should, therefore, be open to both the natural science establishments and to theological theorems. Therefore, the philosophy of a miracle should combine in itself the elements of philosophy of natural sciences and the philosophy of theology.

Finally, it is worth considering the prospects of philosophy of miracle and its development. It seems that this development will be closely related to the advances in natural science and in the philosophy of natural science as well as in theology and the philosophy of theology. Although, it is impossible to predict

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15 Dellinger, “From Yale to Jail”, 418.

their further development fully, we may suppose that it won't eliminate the problem of miracle and it won't deprive it of its philosophical and cognitive attractiveness. At the very most it may cause the situation in which not all 'miracles' are miraculous events and not all the things which are 'miraculous' turn out to be the miracles.

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