

THE GENERAL SCHOLIUM: SOME NOTES ON NEWTON'S PUBLISHED AND UNPUBLISHED ENDEAVOURS

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Abstract

Newton's immensely famous, but tersely written, General Scholium is primarily known for its reference to the argument of design and Newton's famous dictum "hypotheses non fingo". In the essay at hand, I shall argue that this text served a variety of goals and try to add something new to our current knowledge of how Newton tried to accomplish them. The General Scholium highlights a cornucopia of features that were central to Newton's natural philosophy in general: matters of experimentation, methodological issues, theological matters, matters related to the instauration of prisca sapientia, epistemological claims central to Newton's empiricism, and, finally, metaphysical issues. For Newton these matters were closely interwoven. I shall address these matters based on a thorough study of the extant manuscript material.

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