## Comments on Skowronski’s Naturalism and Inductive Arguments

### Summary

Skowronski argues that Draper’s inductive reasoning can be just as plausibly levied to support theism as naturalism. Put differently, any problem with using such inductive reasoning to support theism is likewise a problem with using it to support naturalism. The “modest conclusion” is that we ought not jump to the conclusion, on the basis of the success of methodological naturalism, of the truth of metaphysical naturalism.

Suppose Skowronski’s argument is correct. Where does it leave us? The result is a sort of philosophical stalemate. Where does a stalemate leave us?

## Response

1. Either we need another, different rational argument for preferring naturalism or theism; or we accept that rational arguments are not what incline us, but something else: “ungrounded intellectual preference” (Thomas Nagel), an “oath” (Alyssa Ney), a “banner” (David Papineau), a “physicalist disposition” (. While theists are willing to appeal to something else alongside of reason (or instead of reason, though not contrary to reason) such as faith, religious experience, *sensus divinitatus*, miracles, tradition, an abductive explanation of the rise of Christianity, etc., the naturalist is typically unwilling to appeal to something else alongside reason. Why is this? Why can’t more naturalists admit – as Nagel, Ney, and others do – that their naturalism is more of an allegience to a cause than a rationally supported conclusion. Physicalism, for Ney, is not a truth claim but an oath to “go in my ontology everywhere and only where physics leads me.”[[1]](#footnote-24)
2. Hans Fink argues that naturalism is ambiguous across two very different senses.[[2]](#footnote-25) The first is unrestricted naturalism where nature is everything that is, including (potentially) God, angels, souls, etc. The second is restricted naturalism, where nature is the entire spatiotemporal universe of physical entities together with any entities that are ontologically or causally reducible to those entities. While Skowronski argued against restricted naturalism, unrestricted naturalism is untouched. Unrestricted naturalism is, furthermore, tautologous.
3. Is an “eternal oscillating universe” is just as likely as supernaturalism? Skorownski seems to admit as much early in the paper. If so, it might be rhetorically prudent to allow to the self-identifying naturalist that eternal oscillating universe, or a multiverse, or “Gravity.”

1. Alyssa Ney, “Physicalism as an Attitude,” *Philosophical Studies* 138, no. 1 (2008): 1–15. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
2. Hans Fink, “Three Sorts of Naturalism,” *European Journal of Philosophy* 14, no. 2 (August 2006): 202–21. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)