

Farewell

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Published online: 20 December 2016
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This is the first issue of *Biology and Philosophy* under its new editor, Michael Weisberg, though he will labour under the legacy of my indiscretions, quirks and biases for some time. I began editing *Biology and Philosophy* in 2000; it is time for new eyes and ideas (no doubt many would-be contributors to *Biology and Philosophy* think: long past time). The journal is built on foundations laid down by Michael Ruse, the founder and first editor of the journal. Michael, with the late David Hull, deserves much of the credit for making philosophy of biology a recognisable field within philosophy (though their founding role was powerfully reinforced by Elliot Sober, whose *Nature of Selection* changed the standards of the field). One of their most impressive and enduring contributions to building the field and the community was the establishment of *Biology and Philosophy* in 1986, under Michael Ruse's editorship. When I first drifted into the community myself, beginning in the early 1980s, papers on philosophy of biology in the mainstream philosophy of science journals were relatively rare. That is no longer so: the flagship journals of general philosophy of science, *Philosophy of Science* and *British Journal for Philosophy of Science*, very regularly publish philosophy of biology papers, often ones that are very technically demanding and empirically rich. It is long past the time when one could legitimately grumble away to oneself that philosophy of science was more than philosophy of physics and chemistry. The philosophy of science of 2016 is very different from the philosophy of science of 1982, and the growth of philosophy of biology (and of the other historical sciences) was one driver of that transformation. Philosophy of biology itself has changed over those years too, of course, though it is still dominated to a surprising extent by the conceptual and empirical ramifications of evolutionary theory, broadly understood.

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One of the advantages of editing *Biology and Philosophy* is that the journal is not the journal of any learned society or professional association. When journals are owned by such associations, the editor has all the work and responsibility of running the journal, with very little control over policy and contents. With *Biology and Philosophy*, the buck once stopped with Michael and then with me. If the journal was strong, it was strong because we made good decisions; if it was publishing rubbish, it was because we were asleep at the wheel. This editorial autonomy is precious; it allows the editor to exercise discretion and judgement in the light of his conception of the field and its most pressing and interesting problems. *Biology and Philosophy* was a somewhat different journal under Michael than it was under me. Michael was and is centrally interested in the life sciences in their historical and social settings, and the relationship between biology and a more general intellectual milieu. In contrast to Michael, I could not be less interested in whether one could be, consistently, both a Christian and a Darwinian. I was much more interested in first-order issues in the life sciences, especially, of course, those that raised conceptual and theoretical questions. I do not want to exaggerate the difference: there was a massive overlap in the papers Michael would have published, and those that I did publish. But there is no doubt that there were differences at the margins, and perhaps a bit more than just at the margins. The centre of gravity of the journal changed somewhat as it changed hands. The fact that the editor of this journal has such discretion is one reason why it is a good idea for the role to shift to new hands from time to time. That is not the only reason: I have noticed over the last year or two that I am becoming more grumpy and impatient (contributors may have noticed too): thinking “not another bloody paper on whether species are individuals” when I open the EM system. I expect Michael Weisberg will also somewhat change the journal’s centre of gravity. Peter Godfrey-Smith has helpfully distinguished between philosophy of science (the theoretical and conceptual investigation of the sciences and their methods) and philosophy of nature: attempting to use the philosopher’s toolkit to make progress on first-order but large-scale questions about the world and our place in it. I have done some philosophy of science, but I am mostly a philosophy of nature guy, and that has been reflected in my discretionary decision making. Michael, I expect, will probably nudge the journal back in the direction of philosophy of science (though I hope he will publish some of my work, even so).

As Michael Weisberg will discover, editing a journal is a lot of work. (I am heroically resisting expletives here). But it also involves, endlessly, imposing work on others. Thanks are in order. A first and major thank you goes to Michael Ruse, who passed the journal on in great shape, and said at the time that he was always available for help and advice. But he also promised to do no backseat driving. He was as good as his word in both respects. He gave some very important advice on difficult papers, especially in the first year or so of my regime. Moreover, not only has he never complained to me about anything in the journal face to face (and he is not shy); I am morally certain he has never complained to anyone else either (he is no more discrete than he is shy). His only complaints have been about my appearance, resenting the fact that I, rather than he, represented the profession in the “prof or hobo” internet meme of a few years back. I also would like to publically

thank my associate editors, on whom I have often called upon for advice, especially about referees. Likewise let me publically thank the members of the editorial board, some of whom were fairly shamelessly exploited as referees. But at least they are named and recognised. My biggest thanks must go to the more-or-less nameless army of referees who sorted dross from gold on my behalf, and on behalf of the profession. Refereeing is a pretty thankless job, and is often a lot of work, especially when a paper arrives that has enough real merit to escape flat rejection, while having serious deficiencies in need of repair. Like every editor, I certainly saw a fair number of brief, cursory, and dashed-off reports (and I can understand the temptation to dash-off a report). But I have been immensely impressed by the very large number of detailed, careful, fair-minded and constructive reports that have crossed my desk. Well done and thanks. And now, the power and the glory that is the editorship of Biology and Philosophy passes on to Michael. A new, and kempt, regime. Good luck.