Reflections on the origins and importance of our fields

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During the first half of the twentieth century, several scholars around the globe wished to understand how the natural sciences have come to have a significant bearing on almost all other human endeavours. Consequently, figures such as James B. Conant at Harvard University famously promoted a stand-alone discipline, often referred to as the History and Philosophy of Science (HPS), to bridge the gap in research and scholarship between the sciences and humanities. In the modern context, in which disciplines and sub-disciplines began retreating into ever-deeper levels of specialisation and scholarly isolation, the historical and philosophical studies of science were regarded by Conant and others as the new frontier for preserving the ancient ideals of a wholistic liberal education and the pursuit of wisdom.

From that point on, the field grew and expanded with the Mertonian analyses of sociology of science and the ground-breaking work in the areas of Sociology of Scientific Knowledge (SSK) and Science, Technology and Society (STS), arguably reaching its peak across the world during the 1970s. Unfortunately, university-governing bodies, also since the 1970s, have often had little sympathy for HPS/SSK/STS in the face of industry and government demands for “job-ready” graduates and vocationally oriented degrees. Sadly, in the face of this demand, university departments in our combined areas still struggle to compete for attention and viability.

In this environment, it is more important than ever to insist upon the relevance of our fields to contemporary research and scholarship. As inter-disciplinarity becomes

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the buzzword among university chiefs and in departmental strategic plans, we must assert our potential—already realised—to continue to bridge the gap between disciplines.

Metascience attempts to do its part by highlighting a wide range of publications in the history, philosophy and social studies of science. The combination of reviews published here cover topics at the nexus between history, art, music, philosophy, medicine, sociology, psychology, biology, politics, military technology, and so on and so forth. The willingness of reviewers to engage with these topics, debate differences of opinion, and find common ground with the book authors, is also a testament to the vibrancy of the field.

The symposia contained in this issue are important examples of such interdisciplinary achievement. H. Floris Cohen's book, *The Rise of Modern Science Explained: A Comparative History* (Cambridge, 2015), reflects on an oft-asked question among historians of early modern science: what circumstances made the Scientific Revolution possible in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Europe? Many early and mid-twentieth-century attempts to address this issue focused on an 'internalist' history of mathematics, but Cohen uses a range of recent works to place the intellectual history of Europe in a cultural context that requires an understanding of political, social and religious circumstances. Cohen's wide-ranging discussion, as reflected in this symposium, may spark some debate, but importantly it appeals to a broad readership and does not speak only to historians of early modern science.

Similarly, Talia Morag's *Emotion, Imagination and the Limits of Reason* (Routledge, 2016), traverses some much-contested ground: the nature of human emotions. This topic attracts philosophers of science interested in analysing rational and intelligible human reactions to events and how this relates to the contesting of knowledge. This inevitably draws in questions and debates in psycho-analysis, philosophy of mind, and ethics. This topic is also relevant to literary scholars and historians exploring the expression of human emotions.

We trust that readers will find much to consider in these symposia and enjoy the discussion between its participants. As editors of this journal, we enjoy having the opportunity to facilitate these discussions and to contribute to the promotion of our fields.