



Meditations on ...

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This is the first issue of the year, and let us hope that this year is better than last year. The Coronavirus is still profoundly shaping our lives and careers. Jonathan, Lori, Eric, and I are all working from home, as I know many of you are. This has created new challenges for all of us.

It has been a period of isolation. And everyone, during their long isolation, I am sure, has completed the six meditations of Descartes by now! We are all now tired of his six-step program, from radical doubt to certainty, and, having found a firm foundation for the sciences, are looking for some social interaction. Like Hume, we are ready for some billiards with a few friends.

But the Coronavirus lockdown measures have also created opportunities as well. In Denmark, at least we have been able to go out in the woods. So we have been able to rejuvenate with a stroll in Riis Skov, an urban forest. A mere 15 min from Trøjborg, residents can be at a cliff overlooking the sea, near a commemorative stone dedicated to Dronning Margrethe I, who presented the city with the forest in 1395. What foresight she had! We can only hope our readers have a similarly delightful refuge.

We hope also that this issue provides our readers with another sort of refuge. The issue begins with an engaging symposium on Steven French's new book on theories. Steven insists that theories do not exist, and his arguments for this audacious claim are scrutinized by Chris Pincock, Finnur Dellsén, and Sebastian Lutz. But, as usual for our symposia, we have given Steven the last word, in a reply to his critics.

There is also a series of reviews examining books related to research assessment, by Phil Mirowski, Steven Umbrello, and Eugenio Petrovich. These were each commissioned separately, but collectively they offer insight into an important issue in contemporary academic life. On the one hand, there is some concern that whatever metrics we use should be effectively measuring something worth measuring. That is, we want to ensure our measures of research productivity and quality are valid measures. On the other hand, many of us are rightly sceptical about any such purported quantitative evaluation, especially insofar as these measuring techniques are

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marketed as commercial products. It reminds us that the Ivory Tower is not as isolated as critics of academia often suggest.

In addition, there are a variety of other reviews on a range of topics, including Chinese medicine in America, climate change, cyborgs, and other planets. We are confident that everyone will find something of interest in this issue.

As a reminder, book authors should not hesitate to contact either Jonathan or Brad about a new book they have published. And, similarly, those eager to review books should not hesitate to reach out to us as well. We welcome the contributions of both new and experienced reviewers.

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