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Introduction: economic methodology and philosophy of economics twenty years since the Millennium

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The papers in this special symposium issue of the *Journal of Economic Methodology* advance a variety of perspectives on the current state and possible future development of economic methodology and philosophy of economics. The *Journal* produced a similar such issue twenty years ago in March 2001 – the ‘Millennium symposium: The past, present, and future of economic methodology’ – under the editorship of Mark Blaug, Roger Backhouse, Kevin Hoover, and Uskali Mäki. This issue was designed to be similar in spirit to that one, and to facilitate this we asked the contributors essentially the same questions that the past editors asked contributors to the Millennium issue, only slightly updating them to the present. Here are the questions authors received from us.

- (1) What has been achieved in economic methodology over the past two decades?
- (2) What are the most promising developments in the field?
- (3) How should economic methodology be of greater use to practicing economists?
- (4) Should developments in other disciplines play a great role in economic methodology?
- (5) What sort of relations between methodology and other disciplines ought there be?
- (6) What developments in economists’ practices ought methodologists know more about?
- (7) What balance should there be between explaining economics and appraising it?

By asking authors the same questions, we hoped this would lead readers to compare the contributions to both issues and form their own conclusions regarding how much the field has changed and how much it has stayed the same. We also hoped that such a strategy would help establish a general framework for evaluating the field in the future as well.

Like the past editors, we invited a variety of contributors with the goal of producing a diverse collection of papers. Like the 2001 Millennium issue, we believe this current issue has been successful in this regard. Some authors have looked back at the origins and development of the field; others have emphasized changes in it; while still others have focused on what has been overlooked and deserves greater attention. Our invitation left it open to the authors which and how many of the questions they might address, whether they would write generally about the field or about certain aspects of it, or on their own personal reflections and experiences. We only asked authors that they explain why they took the approach they did. We asked authors for short papers, encouraging them to make summary arguments and point to literatures they thought important. As a result the papers are generally programmatic and outline themes that can be further investigated. We hope in this respect they help initiate further lines of research in the field.

Like the previous editors and their Millennium issue, we also decided not to summarize the contributions to the issue, either individually or as a whole. The previous editors emphasized the value of opening up new lines of inquiry and the need to let the authors speak for themselves.

We share this goal, and haven't tried to add to what they have said or put it in any particular context. We leave that to readers of the issue.

Indeed, our experience at the journal during our fifteen years as editors has also left us with many questions regarding the nature and direction of economic methodology and philosophy of economics. At the beginning, we probably expected submissions would tend to reflect what had been published in the *Journal* in the past, but we soon discovered that new ideas and new approaches were what authors were most likely to write about. This continued, and perhaps accelerated over time. Needless to say, this was exciting, but also a bit challenging for us as editors. That said, we think it makes for a very interesting symposium that covers a wide range of ongoing and emergent research topics. We thus thank all those individuals over the years who have lent their expertise to the review process, and have helped make it possible for the *Journal* and the field to grow as they have.

Twenty years ago at the time of the Millennium issue, saying what economic methodology and philosophy of economics involved seemed to be a more manageable task than it does today. However, perhaps now we only need to wait a little longer than before for the owl of Minerva to fly. We hope, then, that this special issue of the *Journal* and its readers will assist in making that flight happen.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on contributors

John Davis, Professor Emeritus of Economics, Marquette University, USA, and Professor Emeritus of Economics, University of Amsterdam, Netherlands, is the author of *Keynes's Philosophical Development* (Cambridge, 1994), *The Theory of the Individual in Economics* (Routledge, 2003), *Individuals and Identity in Economics* (Cambridge, 2011), co-author with Marcel Boumans of *Economic Methodology: Understanding Economics as a Science* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), and co-author with Robert McMaster of *Health Care Economics* (Routledge, 2017). He is a former editor of the *Review of Social Economy*, was co-editor with Wade Hands of the *Journal of Economic Methodology*, and is the editor of the *Routledge Advances in Social Economics* book series.

D. Wade Hands is a Distinguished Professor of Economics at the University of Puget Sound. He is author of *Reflection Without Rules: Economic Methodology and Contemporary Science Theory* (2001), editor (with John Davis) of *The Elgar Companion to Recent Economic Methodology* (2011) and (with Philip Mirowski) *Agreement on Demand: Consumer Theory in the Twentieth Century* (2006). He is a past president of the *History of Economics Society* and served for fifteen years as co-editor (with John Davis) of *The Journal of Economic Methodology*. His research crosses the fields of economic methodology, the philosophy of economics, and the history of modern economic thought.