Dear Professor Ladyman,

13th November 2021

**COVER LETTER for “Response to Reviewers”**

Professor James Ladyman, Editor

*Studies in the History & Philosophy of Science*

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Thank you for your very prompt, helpful and informative review of our paper *The Poetics of Physics* received 12th November 2021. Clearly I was mistaken to think that this would be “hard to review” since your Reviewers have done their job comprehensively and in depth. It also seems clear that I covered too much ground without leaving adequate markers around the various pitfalls that surround the conventional wisdom as I perceive it, and which, of course, I’m aiming to alter somewhat. I attach a *Response to Reviewers* document for your convenience.

To adequately establish my position both Reviewers agreed that I should have confronted what the First Reviewer called the “huge” modern metaphysics of science literature, but it is clear that this literature is too large and disparate even for a book-length essay to treat adequately. I am aware of some of the literature regarding realism (Meillassoux and Feyerabend spring to mind); and also some of the literature on the nature of language (although my indications of the work of Nicholas Maxwell and Martin Edwardes are not developed), and clearly my references to Owen Barfield, Benjamin Lee Whorf, Michael Polanyi and Iris Murdoch should be supplemented by additional references to more modern thinkers (although Mary Nye’s 2017 assessment of Polanyi in *Angewandte Chemie* and Julia Jordan’s 2012 assessment of Murdoch in *The Modern Language Review* show that the older writers still remain highly relevant).

I suspect that a problem that needs addressing is that (unusually) I treat “metaphysics” as the natural meta-language of physics, instead of its usual connotation of the “systematic study of the structure of reality”. But I note that Rasmus Jaksland’s first comment in his 2021 *Eur.J.Phil.Sci*. paper is that “*there is no univocal definition of metaphysics*”! The trouble is that to even attempt to untie this knot is hardly feasible in such a brief essay. But I would find it very helpful to have some additional pointers from you. For example, the debate between you and John Norton on the *Landauer Principle* (see eg Ladyman & Robertson, 2014) is relevant and has some interesting “metaphysical” connections in the sense that it addresses fundamental properties of information which perhaps cannot be proved within the usual rules of physics. That said, you do address metaphysics directly and helpfully in your 2012 *Philosophical Studies* paper, although at first glance I seem to fall into the Strawson camp (like you, I do not believe that one can have a useful “analytical metaphysics”, although we may understand the term differently). I find Morganti & Tahko’s “*Moderately naturalistic metaphysics*” (2017) attractive, perhaps that is a good place to start? And on scientific realism, it seems that the debate in the *Brit.J.Phil.Sci*. between Psillos (2000) and Lyons (2006) may be at least one good place to start?

In that vein, would you be willing to consider a future submission to SHPS aimed at a satisfactory treatment of some subset of the issues treated in *Poetics*? This would not be a rewrite of the previous work, and would conform to SHPS guidelines.

Yours sincerely

Chris Jeynes (*p.p*. the authors)