

Publishing in Academic Journals

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This is a practical guide to publishing in political science and theory journals designed for doctoral students and young academics. At the end I also give some advice on getting your doctorate published. The guidance offered here is designed to professionalize your approach to publishing and so increase your chances of getting your work into good journals. Of course, if you have nothing interesting to say, or no original research to present, then what I have to say will not help much.

My qualifications for offering this advice are that I have published many articles in refereed journals in fields as diverse as political philosophy and urban politics, as well as four books (though not my doctorate!); and I have been one of the editors of *The Journal of Theoretical Politics* for five years.

Why Do You Want to Get Published?

These days publishing is very important for academics. Publishing has always been valued, both in itself and for career reasons, but today there are greater pressures than ever. In the UK, because of the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), universities are keen for staff not only to publish, but publish in the top journals. Young academics soon find themselves under pressure to quickly achieve a good publication

record. In the long term this means a string of articles in refereed journals, as well as books, articles in lesser journals and edited collections, working papers, and so on. The chances of landing your first academic job are greatly enhanced if you have a few publications, so it is wise to submit some articles by the end of your second year of graduate studies. One article in a top refereed journal may count for far more than many lesser things. But do not set your sights too high; at first all you need is few publications and even book reviews will enhance your CV and make you look active. I say more about this below under 'developing a publishing profile'. Bear in mind though, that completing your doctorate is more important in getting your first job than having published articles.

What Should You Write for Publication?

In order to avoid your attempts at publication distracting you from writing your doctorate you should consider turning one or two of your chapters into papers. This needs to be thought about clearly. A book or thesis chapter is not the same as an article, and whilst the *content* of the piece - the main arguments, empirical findings and so on - might be much the same, the finished product should look very different.¹ It is easy in these days of word processing to lift vast tracts of work from one place - a thesis chapter - and plop them into another - the draft article. The temptation to do this is great, but it is a good idea (always) to write your article from scratch. If you think of the paper as a separate piece of work from your chapter, albeit one with a similar argument, you will get into the right frame of mind to write an *article*; and I assure you referees do notice when articles that pass their way look as though they are culled from something else.

If you do have an idea for writing an article on a subject which is not that of your dissertation - perhaps a comment on a recent article - do not spend too long writing it. Set yourself a clear deadline for completion and stick to it.

Where to Publish

We have got ahead of ourselves. Already we are thinking not only of what to write but of the writing process itself. But *before* you write your article you should decide where you are going to send it; do some market research. This is the professional way of writing. Look at the journals, read through them, see what sorts of articles they publish. Many journals are specialist - some publish political philosophy, some only empirical work - some publish a variety of different types of articles. But beyond that they have their own styles. The type of articles found in *The Journal of Political Philosophy* are very different from those in *Political Theory*, whilst *The Journal of Theoretical Politics* is different again. In political science, some journals such as *Parliamentary Affairs* take qualitative or descriptive articles eschewing any formal or quantitative evidence. Other journals expect articles using quantitative data - the *American Journal of Political Science* is an obvious example. Sometimes you need to look carefully at what each journal has published in the recent past to decide their publishing intentions in the future. *Urban Affairs Quarterly* rarely takes review-type articles using only secondary evidence; it wants articles which present new primary data or evidence on urban government. *The International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, although similar in many respects is much more amenable to publishing theoretical pieces which do not offer new empirical evidence.

Choosing the journal you intend to publish in is important because it will concentrate your mind upon the type of article you are going to write and the style in which you write it. You do not want to waste your time sending your article to a journal which is not interested in your piece - no matter how good it is. Most editors internally review articles when they first arrive and may immediately reject those that do not fit their style (or ones they think are so poor they do not want to waste referees time).

A journal may have had a series of articles on a particular debate or topic. This may mean that it would welcome more such articles; or the editor may have decided 'enough is enough'. If you are considering writing a commentary on a debate carried in a journal it is not unreasonable to write or email the editor to find out if she

is interested. Certainly you should always ask editors if they are interested in review articles before embarking on them. (Interest is not, of course, a promise to publish.)

Other features of style are more difficult to spot, but you should look. For example, in the field of public choice or political economy, economics and political science journals have very different expectations. Most political science journals expect you to place your argument into context. They want the opening pages to say what standard line is, to give a brief review of what others have said on this topic and to say why your approach is valuable. They expect motivation to be provided to entice their readership. Economics journals (even at the political science end, such as *Public Choice*) are the opposite. They want you to cut straight to the chase. Examine the form of articles in the journals in order to structure your own.

It is also worth while choosing which journal to write for in order to format your article according to its style sheet. Journals usually state somewhere (often the back cover) what form your footnotes should take, whether it uses the Harvard system of referencing, advice on preferred spelling, and so on. You can usually write to the editor for a full style sheet. Many also have web pages with this information. Follow the style sheet religiously. Most editors will send your article out to review whatever style it is written in, but it looks more professional if you have already put it in the journal's style. Moreover editors and referees are quick to notice if the article they are reviewing for, say, *Political Studies* is in the style of, say, *British Political Science Review*. They will guess it has been rejected by the other journal and this will colour their attitude towards it.

Most journals now require electronic copy of the final version but it is quite likely that in the near future electronic copy will be required for submission. If so it will be even more important to provide copy exactly as requested or you may find that when reproduced your article becomes very strangely formatted. Whilst referees are supposed to look at content rather than appearance it is very easy to be influenced by the way an article looks on the page or screen.

Above all abide instructions on word length. If the journal states 7,000 words maximum don't send them an article 7200 words long. Most papers can be shortened. I reckon I can cut anything I write by 20%. And I mean anything I write. If I have cut a piece by 20% one day, I can cut it by another 20% the next. The first cuts can be made without losing any worthwhile *content*. Ultimately of course you do lose content; but if you have 7000 words, then you have to decide which arguments are most important, which empirical data most interesting and so on. Something that was 20,000 words to begin with may not be the same piece reduced to 6,500 words, but it is probably more interesting because most of the irrelevant and peripheral parts have gone. It is also likely to be a much simpler argument. Remember your work should be easy to understand. Academics read very quickly and need to be able to see the point at once if they are to take any notice of you; whilst referees do not want to spend time trying to work out what you are arguing.

You might think that to write 6500 words in the first place would be better than writing 20,000 and then cutting, and you may be correct. Some people will advise you to do this, and that may be your preferred style. There is no one best way to write. Personally I find it better to write as much as I want for the first draft. If I am not sure what is the best way of putting something, I frame it both ways and decide which is better later. I also believe that writing is daunting, and if you know that each word is going to count, then it becomes more daunting still. However, if your first draft is 15,000 words, and your final 5,000, then you only going to use, at most, every third word, or sentence, so on the first draft you do not need to worry too much about how it reads. You can afford two out of every three sentences to be duff ones. More, indeed because not only will you have cut two-thirds of the sentences, the ones left at the end will have been redrafted and recrafted. This is the second reason for writing more than you need on your first draft. It encourages redrafting. I believe most people, including most senior academics, do not redraft often enough and it shows. In my published work I tend to go through five to fifteen drafts before publication. Redrafting is not only about improving the prose, it is also about

reconsidering your argument, and looking at potential criticisms of your evidence. The final draft is just about polishing the piece, ensuring that it does read well, and has some style and personality. Before that stage check through it carefully, and, most importantly get someone (and not only your supervisor, but someone who knows nothing about what you are writing) to read through it. Bad expression just annoys reviewers.

The final reason for doing market research on which journal to send your piece to is to do with the review process itself.

The Review Process

Good journals use at least two independent referees, usually three, sometimes more. Referees vary in shape, size, attitude and professionalism. They can offer good advice and useful criticism; they can also be a pain in the ass to the writer who believes that their criticisms not only suck, but could only have been written by a half-wit who must have been reading an entirely different paper from the one they are claiming to review. In fact most try to do a good job, aiming to be fair and provide objective advice not only to the editor but also to the author. Before you condemn the referee, do the job yourself and find out how hard, frustrating and annoying it can be. (There are more half-witted would-be authors than there are half-wit referees.)

Different journals operate different referring practices. Most political science journals review 'double blind'. The author does not know who the referee is, and vice versa. Referees may be able to guess the author, especially if she is well-known, or refers to her own work a lot. Some journals allow the referee to know the name of the author. This is a more standard practice in economics journals. At least one top political science journal I have refereed for sometimes has the author's name on the front page of the article and sometimes not. I suspect it simply depends on whether the author has prepared their manuscript blind. Most new authors would probably prefer to remain anonymous, whilst well-known academics feel their name carries

weight and so want it to be known. But it may also depend upon how many enemies you have made!

Who are your referees going to be? You almost certainly will never find out (though it is always fun to try and guess). But here is a piece of inside advice. When an editor is sending out an article his first thought is 'who to?' He wants someone who knows the area, and whose judgement he trusts. On some topics the list of potential reviewers is large, on others vanishingly small. Editors, when stuck for referees use one or both of two tricks. First they look at who has published on this subject in their own journal. They do so for three reasons. First, they usually have copies conveniently to hand. Secondly, they figure, if we published an article by X, then X must be good enough to review for us. Thirdly, they figure that someone who has (recently) published in their journal will feel a greater obligation to review for that journal. So by looking through the journals it is possible to identify potential referees. If you want to avoid X (because you think X will hate your work) then avoid the journal in which she has recently published. Go to the journal where Y publishes who you think more likely to be amenable to your way of thinking. Furthermore, by considering who might review your stuff, you may be more inclined to check their publications, and make sure you give them credit for any argument or evidence you utilize. Referees hate nothing more than not being referenced where they think they should be!

This leads to editors' second ploy. You may guess that at least one of your referees will be someone you have footnoted. This gives you a strategic problem. If you want to avoid X as referee do you avoid references to them? You may choose not to reference them hoping to reduce their chances of being a referee, but, if nevertheless they do referee your piece and they are not referenced, that may annoy them. There is no way out of this conundrum. The most professional thing is to reference all those that deserve it; but consider adding strategic though strictly unnecessary references to those academics you think might be good referees. (It is also worth noting that the closer the title of your paper is to that of another person's,

the more likely she is to be asked to be a referee.) But all this advice may be of no avail, for most editors also carefully choose one referee who is not contained in the author's notes, and is perhaps slightly aloof from the debate.

Another potential source of referees is the editorial board. Again journals vary in their practice. *The Journal of Theoretical Politics* for example, expects the members of the editorial board to work hard on the journal's behalf, and, on average, send each member at least two articles a year for review. But some journals hardly trouble their board members at all, preferring a masthead with some big names even if they're unwilling to work their passage.

You should also consider what you write about the work of potential referees. This is important. It does not mean that you should not criticize others' work. Of course not: that is (part of) what academia is about. But you should do so respectfully and *make sure you get their arguments/evidence* right. When redrafting your article don't just look at style, look at content. When you assert X says 'alpha' go back and check she actually does so. This means giving proper - that is full and accurate - references. Academics (probably under the pressure to publish but also, I suspect, because of the Harvard referencing system) are getting very lazy, nay sloppy and unprofessional, when it comes to referencing (and I do not exclude myself). It is not good enough to say 'Dowding (1998) claims there are no liberal theories of just secession' - even though I do claim that in the cited work. You should write 'Dowding (1998, pp. 72-80) claims there are no liberal theories of just secession'. I have seen wild claims made about my work in recent years, but the authors rarely cite the page numbers where I am supposed to maintain the views attributed to me. If you cite people properly, and check the citations when you redraft, you can be sure that not only have you made the correct reference, but you have represented the authors' views correctly. This also makes it more difficult for them to respond both in print, and, if they are referees, criticize you in their review.

You may also try to get potential referees' comments prior to sending your article off. Try to go to as many conferences as possible, networking and meeting

academics in your field. Give your paper as often as possible and take careful note of the advice offered; the person giving it is a potential referee. You may also send your paper out to academics in your field, requesting comments. This is a long shot, but is relatively costless. Most well-known academics receive numerous. We simply don't have time to read most of them, but sometimes one catches our eye. To increase the chances of its being read, state in the covering letter where you mention/criticize their work in the paper, and ask them to comment on whether you have understood them correctly. I advise you to send hard not electronic copy. You want to reduce costs to the recipient who may not be bothered to print the copy out (most people still prefer to read from paper than screens) and fear of viruses means many do not open unsolicited email attachments.²

Finally when you do submit the article, make sure you send the requisite number of copies. Journals usually ask for at least three copies, often more. Nothing annoys an editor more than having to photocopy a submission in order to send out it to review. (I always ask the author to send more copies and I sit on the original till I get them.) Not complying with any journal instructions for submission just slows the whole process down.

Rejection

So you have sent your paper off and wait expectantly for a letter from the editor. Good journals usually send a note - by email mostly these days - acknowledging receipt. Many of the lesser journals do not. How long do you have to wait before you get the letter stating whether or not you have been accepted? It can be anything from two weeks to two years, but expect a wait of around three to four months. Two weeks is almost certainly a rejection without it being sent to referees. Three to four months is actually pretty good for a top journal. Why does it take so long? The internal review will take a couple of weeks, and then you must expect referees to take up to two months (editors generally ask referees to take no longer than a month but...). Sometimes referees do not respond at all, or hold on to a script for months and then

say they can't do it, so the whole process has to start again. There is a serious problem of sunk costs (or 'sunk time') for editors with dilatory referees. Does one hang on and wait for X who has repeatedly promised to do the review, or send out to Y who may be no better? Given the restricted list of potential referees (one cannot ask the same person more than a couple of times a year) the temptation is usually to hang on; hence the long delays in giving authors your decision. An editor may even occasionally decide that a referee's report is so sloppy that she can't send it to an author and so must commission another one but generally editors work with what they have got. Good editors will also take some time over their decision, and write a helpful letter to the author.³

There are three types of response from editors to authors. Publish, reject, and 'revise-and-resubmit'. The latter usually comes in at least two categories. Minor changes which the editor may check herself or send out to perhaps one referee again, and major revision which entails a complete resubmission and refereeing process. I write more about this below.

Most journals ask referees to fill in a short questionnaire, I reproduce one from the *Journal of Theoretical Politics* in Figure 1. These are not usually sent on to authors (though for example, *Policy Studies Journal* does this). They also ask referees to write a report which is to be sent on the author. What is a good report? Perhaps the best report for both authors and editors is one word: 'Publish'! Reports favouring publication are usually shorter than ones recommending rejection or 'revise-and-resubmit'. The latter should be at least 500 words and preferably longer. But it is not unknown to get reports of only a few words or paragraphs. When it is your turn to be a referee, take it seriously and remember as you write the report what it is like to receive one. It may be okay to be sarcastic or rude when your name is at the top of the page, but rudeness or vicious wit at others' expense under the referee's cloak of anonymity is cowardly. (If, like me, you sometimes find it hard to contain your sarcasm over an article that really irritates you, don't send off the report the day

you write it, but leave it to one side for a day or two, then edit it in a better frame of mind.)

A good referee's report will state briefly what the article is about, assess its strengths, and criticize those aspects which are weak. If the weaknesses are fundamental, it should say so; and the referee should recommend how the article could be improved by deletion or rethinking. A good referee does this even when she recommends outright rejection. Often you will not know whether the referee has recommended publication, rejection or revise-and-resubmit. She may say on the questionnaire form or in a covering letter, but not in the report itself. Usually you can guess.

What do you do on receipt of the decision? If it is 'publish' then go out and celebrate. But, to be honest, for your first article that is unlikely especially if you have sent it to a top journal. In the five years I have been one of the editors of *The Journal of Theoretical Politics* we have not accepted a single paper on first submission. We either reject them or revise-and-resubmit them (the exception may be a few 'notes' or 'replies' we have published). Many revise-and-resubmits are minor, but often they are major, and some articles have gone through two major revise-and-resubmits (that's three versions), and then we asked for minor changes before the final piece was published.

When you get a major 'revise-and-resubmit' the first thing to do is put the letter and your paper in a drawer for a few days. You are likely to be a bit upset about some of the criticisms, and may believe the referees are wrong and possibly stupid. Don't take that attitude. The best thing to do is to follow their advice very carefully, even if it means a major rewrite, or even collection of new data, more interviews, more field work. If you believe they have misunderstood your argument, don't blame them, blame yourself for not expressing your ideas well enough.⁴ Try to do everything asked of you by the referee and the editor. (A good editor will go through all the points made by the referees, and tell you which points are the key ones for you respond to, which are minor ones he would like you to deal with, and which ones you

can, perhaps, ignore.) If you find you can't do certain things asked of you - perhaps you disagree too fundamentally with the theoretical objection, or the data asked for simply aren't available or are too expensive to collect - then when you resubmit the piece, write a covering letter to the editor. State in the letter everything you have changed and everything you have not, explaining clearly why you did not do everything asked of you. You may say you reduced the scope of your claims because of the problems, or inserted an argument against the point made, or simply lay out the reasons why you have not changed the offending paragraph at all. But it is *vitaly important* that you should do most if not everything asked of you.

How quickly should you resubmit? As fast as possible, though if you've been asked to do a lot it may take you months or even years. But don't do it too quickly. There is little point resubmitting the piece with hardly any changes on a major revise and resubmit. Editors and reviewers are not stupid (on the whole) and will compare the revised piece with the original one. If you've been asked to reduce the paper by a given amount, reduce it by *at least* that amount. (One trick that never works is to resubmit the article in one-and-a-half line spacing rather than double-spaced. It really annoys me that some people think I'm so stupid I won't notice, and publishers *always* notice.)

What do you do with a rejection letter? Same thing! Only this time you resubmit the article to a different journal. Make sure you redraft the article to the style of the new journal (and remember the advice above about writing each paper from scratch). And don't think that you do not need to take note of the referees' comments if you resubmit to a new journal. They may use the same referees! I have certainly been sent the same article up to three times by different journals. If I can see it has not changed from the first time I reviewed it I simply give it the same review. If the author can't be bothered to follow my advice, I certainly can't be bothered to offer new advice. (As a referee you should always tell the editor that you have seen this piece before.)

If your article is rejected, don't bother writing to the editor complaining about the decision or the referee. The editor is exceedingly unlikely to take any notice. All it does is relieve your own frustration and you may as well do that by complaining to your friends about your ill treatment.⁵ Be professional. You've been rejected, so you rewrite. EVERYONE who publishes in the top refereed journals has had rejection letters. That's why you should not put all your energy into one piece.

Developing a Publishing Profile

Most of the advice offered so far has been directed at getting your first piece published. But what should that piece be? And after that how do you develop a good publishing profile?

There are two different strategies to adopt. The first is a high-risk strategy. Spend a long time writing your first article to be directed at the top journal in your field. It is generally believed that publishing an article in *American Political Science Review* or *Philosophy and Public Affairs* will get you a tenure-track job in the US. In economics it is even more important to hit the top journals to get jobs in the best departments. But if you put all your energies into one article and it is rejected, you have to start again. So a second strategy is to try to get some pieces in lesser journals. You should certainly also try to write some book reviews.

Not all journals publish book reviews, but some of the major ones do. The *American Political Science Review* publishes reviews of around 500 words, whilst in Britain *Political Studies* carries regular book notes of 300 words. In fact the new editors of *Political Studies* intend to increase their coverage of books by moving into electronic publishing of book notes and reviews. Book review editors are often stuck for ideas on who to ask to write reviews. Check the name of the Book Review editor (usually someone different from the main editor) and drop them a note - a postcard or an email will do - giving your name, institutional address and three or four research areas in which you feel capable of reviewing books. Remember if you get a book you will have to review it! Do not suggest more than four at most, and do not make them

too specialized. It is also sometimes worth emailing a book review editor offering to review a specific book that is just about to come out. (Publishers usually send out review copies about a month *before* the book is published.)

You may also want to write some short pieces, commenting on debates in the literature. Some journals also take research notes, which can be a little more speculative or less ‘complete’ and are generally refereed by only one or two people. Other journals are not so fully refereed - such as *Parliamentary Affairs*, *Government and Opposition*, and some specialist journals. It is worthwhile contacting the editors to see if they are interested these sorts of articles prior to writing, and easier to get acceptance.

These two strategies are not incompatible. You can spend time on your main piece for one of the top journals, whilst reviewing a few books, and producing less ambitious articles or research notes for other journals. It is a good idea to send what you think is your best work to a top journal simply for the referees’ reports. Do not expect acceptance, anticipate rejection but with advice for improvement so you can then send it to a lower-tier journal. The advice you get first time round will increase your chances of getting it published eventually. Early in your career, a one in three hit rate is very good, and it is perfectly respectable for an established academic.

One reason why you should try to publish in lesser journals as well as the top journals early in your career is the length of time it takes for your piece to appear in print. From submission to acceptance can take from four months to two years (remember it is possible to have one or even two revise-and-resubmits, and you could wait six months for the initial decision.) Then from final acceptance to publication may take six months to two years or more. Most editors like to have accepted copy for the following twelve months. Publishers generally want the final copy from the editor four months prior to publication. So, for a fully refereed quarterly journal an editor will have one issue in press, another being prepared for the publisher. She does not want to scabble around for copy in the months before it is due to be sent to the publisher, that means commissioning pieces and compromising the refereeing

process. If she has two subsequent issues filled or nearly filled she can relax. Sometimes you may submit a piece and get a letter back by return of post stating that the editor is not accepting articles on that topic at present. She may have too much copy, and have filled issues for the coming 24 not 12 months. Authors, and so editors, do not like too long a wait. Given your piece may already have been rejected by one or two other journals the process may easily take three years. This is why it is not too early to submit your first articles for publication at the end or your first year, or early in your second year of your doctoral studies. (Though you should note here, that the entry 'accepted for publication' against an article on your CV is as good as a publication date for prospective employers. The entry 'under review' against a few articles also enhances the CV, as it shows you are research-active, especially if you also have a couple of accepted or published articles. But don't have too many 'under review' articles on your CV; it may look as though you are getting loads of rejections and are simply sending them off again.)

When you are more established as an academic and are trying to build up a publication portfolio ensure you plan ahead. Ideally at any point in time, you will have several articles accepted for publication, several out for review, a couple waiting for revision on revise-and-resubmit or rejection, plus those you are working on for conferences, seminars and to send out for the first time. This means you always have several pieces of work on the go at the same time.⁶ This ensures you do not spend too long on any project, and that you don't invest all your energies on a single project that may not come to fruition. Plan your year ahead to ensure that this happy state of affairs exists. Have an idea when you are expecting to send out articles, and be in a position to start something new as soon as they are out. This means - if you are an empirical researcher - that you are collecting evidence for your next articles before you have sent out the ones you are working on now. If you are a political philosopher you should be reading for your next project before you have finished the one you are currently involved in. Again I reiterate that you should concentrate on finishing your doctorate. That does not mean you cannot be thinking of what you will be working

on 'post doctorate'. You should also have 'major' projects and minor ones. It is good to take a break from your major projects to work on the minor ones now and then. It keeps you fresh.

Do not assume that publication will change anything. Do not expect to sit back and receive plaudits. It is very sobering to use the citation index to see how often one's work is cited. Readership may be greater than citations, but not many people will actually read your paper and most of those that do will only skim it. I honestly believe that the only way to make a mark on the profession is to publish everything you have to say three times - in modified forms - in different forums. One should also remember the advice that Brian Barry gave to me when I complained that X had taken no notice of my criticisms despite admitting he had no answer to them. Brian pointed out that one rarely convinces one's peers, and certainly not academics older than you. 'The battle is for the doctoral students. If they cite you and not your opponents, you've won. If they cite your opponents and not you they've won.' Publication may be a long battle, but changing the nature of the academy is the war.

A Few Words About Publishing Your Doctorate

When you are writing your doctorate you should already be thinking about it as either a series of papers, or as a book. If you want to publish it as a book remember that *publishers don't like publishing doctorates*. Doctoral theses are worthy, well-researched and designed to demonstrate to examiners that the candidate knows all about the subject. This tends to make them narrow, long-winded and boring. When approaching publishers, if you admit your idea is your doctorate, tell them that you want to completely rewrite and restructure it for publication. That is what they will want, and your saying it in advance will convince them that you know what you are about. Do not send them a copy unless they ask for it. Write a covering letter, a short description of the argument, a chapter structure (with a paragraph about each chapter) which covers no more than three or four pages. If the publisher wants more they will ask for it. Longer initial approaches will not be read. The publisher will not have

time nor inclination. A better idea might be to plan a different piece of work around some of the themes of the doctorate rather than a rewrite itself. Or cut the whole thing up into little pieces for publication as articles.

Finally

Do not be discouraged by rejections or revise-and-resubmits. They are as much a part of the writing process as thinking, collecting evidence, sitting at your computer typing, and asking friends and colleagues to comment on your work. Treat them as such.

Endnotes

¹ Phds comprising collections of papers are acceptable in many economics programmes but not yet in most political science departments.

² Of the 300 or so papers sent to the Political Studies Association 2000 Conference for the website about 5% contained viruses.

³ I would like to pay tribute to Nicholas Miller the main receiving editor for *The Journal of Theoretical Politics*. I see every letter he sends authors and they are often masterly pieces of work in their own right. Nick, especially for 'revise-and-resubmits' but also for rejections, lays out the problems clearly providing precise advice for authors. Indeed often so good is his advice on a topic I think we should publish his letter as well as (sometimes instead of!) the article itself.

⁴ A good workman does not blame his tools, a good academic does not blame her referees.

⁵ I confess that when I was a doctoral student, I did this. I had a rejection based, as far as I could see, on two points: one that I had taken an exclusively 'rational choice' approach to an issue, and second that my references were rather dated. I complained that my approach was perfectly legitimate for the argument I was making; and did an analysis of references in articles in the journal for the previous two years, demonstrating mine were more recent than the average for the journal as a whole. I thought this was very clever. I also made one of my favourite points - that I reference the *first* person to have

pointed something out, not the *last* one, nor *everyone*, to have done so. It did me no good, and nor should it have done.

⁶ Von Wright, a Cambridge philosopher, used to joke ‘start an article a day, finish one a week.’ Not even philosophers can actually do this, but ‘start an article a week, finish one a month’ might be something to aim at.