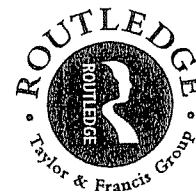


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Economics and Interdisciplinary Exchange

Edited by Guido Erreygers



London and New York

HB
71
E266
2001

Contents

First published 2001
by Routledge
11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada
by Routledge
29 West 35th Street, New York, NY 10001

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group

© 2001 Editorial material and selection Guido Erreygers; individual chapters, the authors.

Typeset in Garamond by Taylor & Francis Books Ltd
Printed and bound in Great Britain by Biddles Ltd, Guildford and King's Lynn

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
Economics and interdisciplinary exchange / edited by
Guido Erreygers.
p. cm.

Rev. versions of papers originally presented at the 4th annual
European Conference on the History of Economics, held Apr. 23–25,
1998 at the University of Antwerp.

Includes bibliographical references and index.
I. Economics—Congresses. I. Erreygers, Guido, 1959– II. European
Conference on the History of Economics (4th: 1998: University of
Antwerp)

HB71b.E266 2001
330—dc21

00-050995

ISBN 0-415-22445-4

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episode to reconstruct the quarrels that existed among the first econometricians concerning the usefulness of Newtonian mechanics for economics.

In the last contribution, Arnold Wilts explores the relation between economic science and economic policy. He examines the evolution of Dutch academic economics in the period 1930–1960, and shows how it was influenced by the emergence of the Dutch welfare state. Between 1930 and 1960 the boundaries of Dutch economics became stronger, and also more impermeable. Before the Second World War philosophically and sociologically oriented approaches were still much in vogue in Dutch academic economics. But after the war things rapidly changed: Dutch economics developed into a much more mathematically oriented discipline, with a strong macroeconomic flavour. Wilts tries to establish that this development is intimately related to important social and political changes in Dutch society. After 1945 the Dutch government considerably expanded its intervention in economic life. As a result the government bureaucracy grew significantly, creating an unprecedented demand for economists with expert knowledge on policy issues. Many academically trained economists specialised in model-building, and became more and more involved in the management of the Dutch welfare state. In his detailed analysis of the evolution in the field of economics in the Netherlands, Wilts combines information on the development of economics in academia (leading economists, institutions, professional practices, etc.) with information on developments outside academia (government bureaucracies, policy making, etc.), showing that the two were strongly correlated.

Notes

I thank John Cunliffe for his comments on a first draft of this introduction.

- 1 See, for instance, her book *The Vices of Economists: The Virtues of the Bourgeoisie* (1997), but also her columns 'Other Things Equal' in the *Eastern Economic Journal*.
- 2 The essays in Winston and Teichgraber (1988) focus much more on present-day research.

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1 Economic life in nineteenth-century novels

What economists might learn from literature

Bruna Ingrao

The languages of culture

Culture is a network of languages serving to express and understand human experience: it is that symbolic network without which human beings cannot live their lives.¹ The languages of culture are many. The symbolic network through which we interact both with experience and with other human beings is a complex set of languages. This colourful patchwork of languages includes the visual arts, music, dancing, poetry, theatre, philosophy, religion, scientific discourse and many other forms of expression, including the novel.

Each of these symbolic languages has its own codes and conventions in communication. Each has developed genera and species of specialised techniques of expression and rules of evaluation, evolving over the centuries or millennia. Each has a living history in present cultural life. We may speak of landscape paintings or portrait paintings, the nude in the visual arts, epic poetry or lyric poetry, tragedy, the symphony or the quartet, prayers, mystical literature, metaphysics or ethics or epistemology, and so on. In scientific literature as in all other forms of symbolic language, there are stylistic codes, rules of expression and codes of truth.

Our symbolic network is a wonderful babel of languages. It is doubtful whether the human tongues we know may be properly translated one into another without losing or distorting meaning. However, the great effort of communication involved in translation, and thus the effort to understand the original meaning, is an essential and deeply human task, rich in learning and emotions. In his book *After Babel* G. Steiner wrote: 'translation proper, the interpretation of verbal signs in one language by means of verbal signs in another, is a special, heightened case of the process of communication and reception in any act of human speech' (Steiner 1992: 436).

The languages of culture do not admit of translation from one into another. The interpretation of signs in one symbolic language by means of signs in another can only perform an auxiliary function. Translation cannot convey the essence of meaning, since it destroys the very function that the