

spective of economists is mistaken. McCloskey and I are more interested in understanding the role of methodological arguments in economic discourse and, in general, the ways in which economists attempt to persuade each other, students, politicians, and whoever is willing to listen to them. This interest has so far brought about attention for the use of rhetorical devices, different domains of discourse, and stylistic differences in economic discourse—all of which are issues that Boland leaves untouched in his writings.

Accordingly, much of the disagreement in this debate results from differences in interest: we happen to share an interest in talking about economics but disagree on how we should focus and organize our conversation.

Afterword by Uskali Mäki

After a discussion like that, covering a varied range of topics at a fast pace, I am happy for this opportunity to use some hindsight. It is especially welcome to a slow mind like mine.

1. First, in response to Alex Rosenberg's reply to my question about unused philosophical resources, I want to clarify my view by saying that I have never regarded philosophy as anything like a panacea. The proper relationship between philosophy and economics (both the theoretical substance of the latter and the behavior of its practitioners) is and will always be a problem in such foundational studies which are now often called methodology of economics. I think it is clear that we cannot tackle economics with empty hands—with no philosophical concepts—just as economists cannot tackle economic realities without their theoretical notions. In this sense the methodology of economics is, so to say, inescapably *philosophy-laden*: you cannot analyze economics without recourse to existing philosophical notions. The problem is *how* this recourse is accomplished: consciously or unconsciously, critically or uncritically, creatively or dogmatically, systematically or arbitrarily. I recommend a critical, creative, and systematic attitude toward available philosophical tools and toward inventing new notions. Results of this attitude should be, at least partly, based on what we find out about the reality of economics. So the proper relationship between (methodological) theory and economics is pretty much the same as that between (economic) theory and the economy. How far this analogy can be taken is an open question.

2. This brings me to Arjo Klamer's remark that one of the virtues of what now seems to be called the rhetorical approach is its intelligibility to economists and its compatibility with economists' concepts and con-

ceptions concerning their own practices. No doubt this is an advantage in some respects. Economists are not philosophers, and although they sometimes try to rationalize what they are doing (or criticize what others are doing) in terms which have been borrowed from traditional epistemology, the relationship between what they rationalize and what they use for rationalizing is often external and even arbitrary. Much of methodological work on economics suffers from the same problem. So it might seem to be a fine thing to bring metatheoretical considerations closer to the everyday life of economists' communities. Thanks to people like Klammer and McCloskey, we are learning more about one level of the day-to-day practices of economists—the level which is within the reach of the sort of hermeneutic anthropology cultivated by these two rhetoricians. This is the level which is within the reach of economists' spontaneous self-understanding, too. Hence the intelligibility to economists of the concepts used in the rhetorical approach. But there may be more to economics than this level. At this stage of metatheoretical inquiry we cannot exclude the possibility that economics has (or could have) some kind of epistemic relation to the world. Here we encounter the limits of the rhetorical approach: it seems to ignore the epistemic dimension of economics (economics as potential knowledge) and overemphasize the pragmatic dimension (economics as a system of language games or what have you). Epistemic concerns about truth etc. may be a long way off from the daily putterings of economists and thus, Klammer might think, also not so intelligible with concepts of their spontaneous self-understanding. A pointed attention to the pragmatic aspect of economics is a good thing (here I am not so harsh as Rosenberg and Boland were in the discussion), but that should not happen by dispensing with the epistemic aspect (here I side with Boland and Rosenberg). A task for future work in the methodology of economics is, in my opinion, to find ways combining the epistemic and the pragmatic. I cannot imagine any a priori reasons why this could not be done.

3. Larry Boland's work is not devoid of epistemological questions. Unfortunately, he failed to respond to my argument about the reasons for conventionalism in neoclassical economics. He reconstructed my argument incorrectly, which led him to mistaken conclusions. One of the premises of my argument was not that "all theories are false" but something like "it is generally believed by neoclassical economists that the basic statements of their theories are, strictly taken, false because of their simplifying and idealizing character." This implies two things. First, you cannot infer from such a statement about the epistemic attitudes of economists that a theory about all theories as false is itself false. Second, I did not announce myself as a supporter of such a theory. Thus, Boland's attempt to prove

me silly failed. And the problem I raised remains to be resolved. Economic theories just are more complicated creatures than can be understood by means of too simple philosophical notions.

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