



Philosophy-Economics Network Réseau Philosophie-Economie

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Editorial

Interaction “Philosophy-Economics” and HET, a relationship to specify

In the almost fifteen months of existence of the network, the accumulated experience incites us to dedicate this editorial to an issue we have had many times to face with: namely the degree of independency between “economic philosophy” (in the way we understand it) and “history of economic thought” (HET) a classical research axis of the economists. Although specialties from which one can conceive the interactions between philosophy and economics are numerous, we have identified three major axis of interaction between philosophy and economics first mentioned in the launching letter of the network (November 2012): (a) moral and political philosophy and normative economics, (b) philosophy of sciences and economic methodology, (c) history of philosophy and history of economic thought.

Our permanent concern in the management of the network is to mention on the website texts or events in which both disciplines are clearly involved, either in a balanced way or with one “major” discipline and the other one with a rather “secondary” role. Independently of the chosen perspective (ethical, epistemological or historical) it is the coexistence of these two disciplines that is, according to us, the necessary condition for interactions between them – in order that economists, regardless their area of expertise (macro- and micro-economics, international economics, finance, public economics, *etc.*) try to discuss with philosophers who see in economics a relevant field of thought and accept to take interest in.

This open-minded position on all fields of economics does not prevent us from admitting the obvious: economists specialized in HET have a particular sensitivity towards the interactions between philosophy and economics, as attested, for instance, by the openness to economic philosophy of numerous journal of HET. This particular sensitivity however does not exempt the HET specialty from the above-mentioned interaction criterion. In other words, in order to be part of economic philosophy, researches in HET have, according to us, also to be of interest for philosophers and historians of philosophy, or even to involve them in. Just like research specific to other specialties of economics, works of pure HET do not come by

themselves under the philosophy-economics interaction and do not have to be systematically published on the network. All the more that HET works claim, as in other specialties of economics, their complete autonomy from philosophy¹.

It is the meaning of the reply we have made few weeks ago to one of our members in order to explain to him why we choose not to circulate information concerning the publication of HET books in a collection entitled “Naissance de l’économie politique [Birth of Political Economy]”. Despite the fact that, at the concerned period (up to the 19th century), the distinction between economics and philosophy was widely porous, it seems difficult to consider that the authors in question come under the interaction between philosophy and economics in the way we understand it nowadays, with history of philosophy now being a well distinct field from the HET. The advantage of this stance is to avoid the superficial solution that would consist in turning our network into a “black hole” of social sciences: by extending the already large field of the interaction “philo-eco”, any reflection of social sciences, beyond the sole history of thought, would have its place on our network, as soon as a philosophical or economic dimension could be identified (cf. newsletter n° 2 where this possible slide was already pointed out).

Those interested by these noteworthy remarks will find here below the detailed argument that the secretariat of the network has sent to our colleague. Indeed, beyond the particular case considered, this argument applies to a lot of other cases which we have had to face with and we submit it to the discussion (as usual, your comments can be sent to secretariat@philo-eco.eu)

Excerpt from our reply

“If we have chosen not to mention the young collection “Naissance de l’économie politique”, it is because it seems to us that it comes under HET and not under economic philosophy. This is a position (which as such can, and even must, be discussed) concerning the definition of the field of economic philosophy. This issue first appeared in the site with the debate (that has caused rather less than expected reactions and replies) concerning the name to give to this disciplinary field; depending on the occasion, one calls it “economic philosophy” “philosophy of economics” or “economic methodology”. Behind this debate, there was of course the question of the definition of the research field itself. In our opinion, the *Philosophy-Economics Network* is not a network of historians of economics and its main objective is to circulate information and favour interactions between philosophy and economics on *contemporary* issues.

To put it more straightforwardly: we are totally convinced of the importance of studying the history of thought (of the HET and the history of thought in general) in order to understand the world and its contemporary issues. It is impossible to know where we stand (and even where we go), if we do not know where we come from. Our knowledge and our disciplines depend on too many past theoretical choices that we cannot afford not to study history. And pretending to make economic philosophy without ever referring to the history of thought would not only be a methodological mistake, it would be totally absurd. This partly explains why a significant number of our members would probably describe themselves as specialists of HET.

1. Like Joseph Schumpeter who, in his famous and influential *History of Economic Analysis*, claims: "I hold that the garb of philosophy is removable also in the case of economics" (*History of Economic Analysis*, p. 28, Routledge, 2006). This quote was recently used and discussed in another perspective by Mardellat in “Qu’est-ce que la philosophie économique ? [What is economic philosophy?]”, *Cahiers d’économie politique/Papers in Political Economy*, 2013 (65), p. 10.

It is unquestionable that works of economic philosophy very often involve the study of the history of economic thought, but, on the one hand, it is not the case of all approaches of economic philosophy and, on the other hand, any work coming under HET does not come immediately and for that reason alone under economic philosophy in the way we understand it. On a personal basis, we have a strong interest in and affinity with the HET, but we also have the conviction that economic philosophy cannot be reduced to this disciplinary subfield. Besides, we did not create the *Philosophy-Economic Network* in order to compete, in France, with the *Charles Gide Association* that promotes (and does so very well) the study of the history of economic thought for more than 25 years or, in Europe, with the *Society for the History of Economic Thought* that does so internationally since 1996. Your possible reply could be that circulating information is not a form of “competition”. However, the increasing number of news published on our network website (39 in November 2013) and the fact that there exist channels for diffusing information concerning HET lead us to think that our members will be informed of the existence of the collection “Naissance de l’économie politique”. We also believe it is important to focus, on the network website, on information coming under the interaction between economics and philosophy – that would be very poorly distributed without our network.

If it is impossible to create a network without having some guiding ideas, it is also clear that we do not possess the truth on what is (what must be?) economic philosophy and that we defend a specific conception of it – it exists inevitably other conceptions of this field. We think that the *Philosophy-Economics Network* (with its 370 members to this day) has reached a sufficient size for the issue of the definition of economic philosophy be asked and discussed. We will think of the best way to launch this discussion – our first debate having aroused, as I told you, reactions short of our expectations. We would be very interested in your opinion both on the substantial content of the issue as well as the possible modalities of implementation of such a discussion.”

Claude Gamel (AMSE-GREQAM, Aix-Marseilles University)

Jean-Sébastien Gharbi (AMSE-GREQAM, Aix-Marseilles University)

News

The life of the network

Herein, you will find some news concerning the Network:

- The number of members of the *Philosophy-Economics Network* continues to increase (but more slowly than previously). On March 1st, 2014, it holds 387 members – with a proportion of non French-speaking researchers of almost 44 %.
- We are partnering with the *Second International Conference “Economic Philosophy”* (Strasbourg, October 9th-10th, 2014). According to the information provided by the local committee, the call for papers of the conference, ended on last 31st January, has received 172 proposals. The answers of the committee will be sent on next March 31st.
- The *Network* site (<http://philo-eco.eu>) includes a new category (on the right, on the homepage) entitled “Master Programs”. The aim of this new category is of course not to build in the short term an exhaustive list of all the European Master programs coming under the interaction “Philosophy-Economics” (such as PPE programs, “*Philosophy, Politics and Economics*”). As with the other categories, the aim is to circulate information on creations and evolutions of these kind of programs, either that our members will send us (secretariat@philo-eco.eu) or that we will find by ourselves.
- On the *Network* site, once again, a second discussion theme (“Debate n° 2”) on the “Criteria of economic philosophy” has been recently launched in the tab “Debates”. The starting point of this debate is a text written by Wolf Dieter Enkelmann (Institut für Wirtschaftsgestaltung, München). Your comments may be left in French or in English on the *Network* site, in the section “Debate n° 2”).
- In our third newsletter (late October, section « News ») the question of setting up, in the midterm, a more structured organization of the *Network* has been asked, of which solutions should be considered in the present letter. This consideration is premature. The three proposed solutions, although still plausible, are also still undecided. We are committed that the *Network* continues in its present form (interactivity and volunteerism) at least up to the next *Strasbourg Conference*, in autumn 2014. We hope that, on this occasion, exchanges with participants at this conference will allow to update on supports and possible collaborations and to find more sustainable solutions.

Pioneering Centre
Hoover Chair of economic and social ethics
University of Louvain (Belgium)

We reinitiate here the section “Pioneering Centre” appeared for the first time in our newsletter n° 1 (in French). If there is a place in Europe that contributed a lot to explore further the interaction “philosophy-economics” in the last decades, the Hoover Chair of the university of Louvain (Belgium) may be that place indeed. For that purpose, a key role has been played by the fellowships of the Chair, from which scholars of many countries have benefited one after the other for more than twenty years. After their stay in Louvain, they often have proved to be valuable intermediaries to promote interest in the debate on issues of social and economic ethics. Many thanks to Philippe Van Parijs for giving us the presentation text² below.

“The Hoover Chair of economic and social ethics was created at the initiative of Rector Pierre Macq with a grant from the Hoover Foundation for the development of the *Université Catholique de Louvain* (UCL)³ in 1991. The Hoover Chair was assigned two tasks: to stimulate ethical reflection in research and teaching at the Faculty of economic, social and political sciences of the UCL; and to contribute to a clear and well informed public debate about the ethical issues that arise in our society in the various areas covered by the Faculty's disciplines.

Gradually, the Hoover Chair has developed a number of mutually reinforcing instruments to achieve these objectives. From the start, a permanent Committee has defined its guidelines. This committee includes the head of the Chair, the dean of the Faculty of economic, social and political sciences and a representative of each of its departments. Over the years the Committee was expanded to include additional permanent members who joined the Hoover chair as well as by representatives from all the Faculties of the university.

From the start, the Chair's activities have been announced in a printed newsletter published at the beginning of each semester, later combined with a website (www.uclouvain.be/chaire-hoover). In time the printed newsletter was replaced by an e-newsletter published about fifteen times a year (*Hoover-Info*, to which it is possible to subscribe on request to chaire-hoover@uclouvain.be).

The Hoover Chair itself organizes three types of activities:

- (1) Three times per semester, the “midi de l'éthique” (“noons of ethics”) brings together people, mostly teachers and researchers of the Faculty, with the aim to discuss (in French) a concrete and controversial question with two invited speakers.

2. This text is an updated (and translated) version of the presentation of the Hoover Chair, which was included in the volume published for the university of Louvain's 575th anniversary (‘L'éthique comme engagement’ in *Une aventure universitaire*, G. Ringlet ed., Bruxelles: Racine, 2000).

3. In 1914, long before he became president of the United States, Herbert Hoover was a businessman living in London. From the outset of the First World War, he took to heart the plight of the Belgian population on the verge of starvation, as a result of German occupation and of the blockade imposed by the allied forces. With the support of the Belgian financier Emile Francqui, he aimed to provide (and to sell) food, which was greatly lacking in the occupied territory. At the end of the war substantial profits remained. Hoover and Francqui decided to assign to use these funds for the promotion of higher education and scientific research in Belgium. This financial capital was used to create the Hoover Foundation; the Francqui Foundation; the University Foundation (Fondation universitaire); as well as the Belgian American Educational Foundation.

- (2) Each Tuesday at 12.45 (if no “midi de l’éthique” is scheduled) the “mardis intimes de la Chaire Hoover” (or MiCH - “The Informal Tuesdays”) take places. Most members and visitors of the Chair, as well as others with an interest in the topic under discussion, attend this informal meeting. The short presentation by one of the members of the Chair or an invited speaker, defending a stimulating thesis with vivid examples, is followed by a lively debate (in French or English).

- (3) The Hoover chair organizes many workshops, often as part of specific projects (for example the Bernheim project “Social Responsibility in Economic Life”) or together with other research centres. These workshops, which are usually held in English, bring together speakers from many different disciplines with an interest in the same topic, both from Belgian and abroad.

Moreover, the Hoover Chair cooperates actively with the University Foundation, which shares the Chair’s origins in the Hoover Foundation. The aim of that cooperation is to organize two projects, gathering (in Brussels, using English as a language) scholars from all academic institutions in Belgium. The first activity is the annual *Ethical Forum*, first organized in 2002, aims to discuss challenges faced by (Belgian) universities in performing their mission to teach, to do research and to serve society. The second activity is the *Re-Bel* initiative (*Rethinking Belgium’s Institutions in the European Context*), launched in 2009, which organizes two public events every year and publishes a series of e-books based on the presentations at the events.

From time to time, the Hoover Chair also organizes exceptional events for a broader public. For example the Chair’s fifth anniversary (in December 1995) was marked by a big international symposium entitled “*Repenser (radicalement) la solidarité*”. The event marking the twentieth anniversary in November 2011, with the theme: “What can ethics do for economy and society? What can university do for ethics?”, drew a large audience. The twentieth anniversary also gave occasion to the publication of an edited volume that reflects the spirit of the Hoover Chair (*Arguing about Justice*, downloadable from the website of the Chair). In 2016, the Hoover Chair plans to organize an event on the topic “*Utopies pour le temps présent*” in order both to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Chair and to mark the 500th anniversary of the publication of the first edition of Thomas More’s *Utopia* in Louvain.

Finally, since 1995 the Chair offers a complementary study program in economic and social ethics, intended for graduates or students of any discipline who, to cite the brochure, “seek to find the right way to work and act in our society and in our world, while being consistent with their beliefs and behaving with a degree of awareness and lucidity but without any fanaticism or fatalism”. The courses for this program can be spread out over three academic years. They include a general course on economic and social ethics, courses in moral philosophy and political economy, an exercise course for the students of the program and a set of optional courses from other programs. Every year, the exercise course ends with a residential weekend in which members and visitors of the Chair participate as well. This weekend is usually experienced as the highlight of the year at the Chair Hoover.

In addition to activities organized at the UCL, there are countless others events organized by third parties, in Belgium and abroad, where members of the Chair are invited to participate - and participate as much as they can. These activities are sometimes academic conferences, but often they take place outside university circles, and range from the “fourth world” NGO “Aide à toute détresse” to the European Commission, from Baha’i movement to the King Baudouin Foundation’s program on Poverty and Social Justice. Other activities include forum discussions and interviews in printed or audiovisual media.

The topics about which members of the Hoover Chair are invited to think and speak are extremely diverse. They range from third world debt to the use of Internet, from the design of electoral systems to the financing of religion, from intergenerational justice to gender discrimination. Whatever the question under discussion, the “style” of the Chair consists in combining the critical tools that ethical principles offer with the formulation of radical proposals aimed at improving, in line with the principle, the present situation. This ‘style’ is promoted by the members of the Hoover Chair both through their acting in its spirit, as well as through their teaching activities. In this way, the Chair hopes to contribute to inspire and train a specific kind of “*universitaires engagés*”.

An ‘*universitaire engagé*’, in this sense, is the polar opposite of an obsequious scribe reporting to a religious hierarchy, a political party or a rich sponsor. (S)he is neither a friend of prejudices present in public opinion, nor a professional provocateur that enjoys nothing more than to create a sensation. An ‘*universitaire engagé*’ is someone to whom society gives the freedom, but also the responsibility, to say what (s)he thinks without indulging jargon or evading issues, to the best of their competence, in the light of value judgments they should not hide but on the contrary spell out frankly. It is someone who has the duty to say what (s)he thinks and why, especially when it goes against the grain, without passion or spite, with the formidable serenity they derive from the sincere, uncompromising search for what justice demands and what the truth commands.”

Philippe Van Parijs

Philippe Van Parijs has directed the Hoover Chair since its creation in 1991. The other permanent members of the Hoover Chair are Christian Arnsperger, Jean-Michel Chaumont, Thérèse Davio, Axel Gosseries, Hervé Pourtois and Yannick Vanderborght.

<http://www.uclouvain.be/chaire-hoover>

Promising Center

Witten Institute for Institutional Change (WIIC)

Witten/Herdecke University (North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany)

We also resume the section “Promising Centre” appeared in the previous newsletter. The Witten Institute for Institutional Change (WIIC) is a new research centre that gives an important room to the interaction between philosophy and economics. On the Network site, we recently have presented the Master Philosophy, Politics and Economics that just has been created by this centre. We do thank a lot Jens Harbecke for having sent us this presentation text.

“We are proud to announce the establishment of the Witten Institute for Institutional Change (WIIC) at Witten/Herdecke University (Germany) in January 2014. The WIIC deals with issues that arise at the interface between society, economy, philosophy, and politics. It aims to develop internationally recognized scientific research and to establish discussion formats with a lasting positive impact on society. Moreover, the WIIC will run the new international Master’s program “Philosophy, Politics, and Economics” at Witten/Herdecke University.

The financial and economic crisis, the Euro crisis, the national debts and economics growth slumps with their consequences for societies around the world all constitute scenarios that cannot be adequately analyzed by a single scientific discipline. At the same time, however, today's science is characterized by a trend of an ever-increasing specialization. The recent financial and economic crisis is therefore also a crisis of the social sciences. The cultural developments and political processes along with their global impact on economic events have often been neglected by classical academic research.

The WIIC, in contrast, joins a very recent trend by emphasizing a contextually oriented thinking towards the issues and problems mentioned above. It shows how society, economy, and politics can be conceived and analyzed together without giving up the advantages of specialization and scientific division of labor. Moreover, it emphasizes the role of the philosophical underpinnings of research in these fields, and it draws attention to ethical questions in the relevant contexts.

A leading theme of the institute is the issue of economic growth and the development of the future society. The assumptions that stagnant economies will inevitably be haunted by a distribution struggle and that firms with zero growth necessarily face high future risks form the solid ground of economic policy as well as of a common management philosophy. The WIIC is concerned with the societal and political prerequisites for successful business performance, with the global dimensions of growth and its possible limits, and with the impact of both on democratic societies. For a comprehensive understanding of these issues, political, cultural, social and ethical/philosophical questions are relevant.

A second focus is on the formal and informal rules that shape economic exchange and that influence the interaction between the economic system and other social subsystems. In this respect, the WIIC benefits from a unique concentration of institutional economists in Germany at the Faculty of Economics of Witten/Herdecke University. The Witten economists have long engaged in interdisciplinary research on topics such as democracy, global

governance, social ontology, ethical dimensions of economic action, European politics, etc. The WIIC will help to further strengthen this research focus.

The founding members of the WIIC are Prof. Jens Harbecke, Prof. Birger Priddat, Prof. Dirk Sauerland, Prof. André Schmidt, Prof. Joachim Zweynert and collaborators. In the near future the institute will be extended by two professorships. The institute will seek collaborations with similar institutions and scholars with a similar research focus. It will support a PhD program, provide research fellowships, and organize the Witten Lectures in New Economic Thinking.

For more information on the WIIC, please contact Joachim Zweynert on joachim.zweynert@uni-wh.de. A website will soon be available.

For information on the new international Master's program in "Philosophy, Politics, and Economics" run by the WIIC, please visit:

<https://www.daad.de/deutschland/studienangebote/international-programs/en?p=d&s=kr&id=4147#q=witten&subject=0&langDistribution=0&sortBy=1&page=2&display=list>

...and...

<http://www.uni-wh.de/en/economics/philosophy-politics-and-economics-ma/>.

The Master's program in "Philosophy, Politics, and Economics" run by the WIIC is offered in English and it is open to outstanding students from all over the world who are interested in excellent transdisciplinary education on organizations and institutions in a global perspective. At the center of the program are three thematic areas: 'Global Economic Development', 'Global Governance', and 'Philosophy and Society'. The program prepares the students for leading positions in political and social institutions and in NGOs, for jobs in organization development, for working in politics and economics-related consultancy and in other positions requiring a high degree of analytical competence at the interface between economics and politics. The program also constitutes an excellent basis for entering a Ph.D. program on issues at the interface of economics and political science, political philosophy and philosophy of economics."

Sent by Jens Harbecke