
Roundtable dialogue on pluralism

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Biographical notes: Jack Reardon teaches economics in the School of Business at the Hamline University. His research interests include economics education, energy and the environment, and labour economics. He has published in a wide variety of journals including the *Journal of Economic Issues*, *Monthly Labor Review* and *International Journal of Green Economics*. He has published *A Handbook for Pluralist Economics Education* (Routledge) and *The Economics Curriculum: Towards a Radical Reformulation* (World Economics Association Books). He is currently finishing a principles of economics textbook for Pluto Press.

1 Editor's introduction

In 2009, I wrote, perhaps presumptuously, that “the argument for pluralism has been successfully made” [Reardon, (2009), p.9]. Indeed, pluralism has become a buzzword, a modus operandi, and the structural foundation for many global groups such as the WEA, Rethinking Economics, and the PEPS. Yet, at the same time, pluralism has not been embraced by all; indeed some have parried pluralism, and even those accepting, often disagree on its key points.

As founding editor of the *IJPEE*, I thought it prudent to cast our nets across the pluralist spectrum, to fathom our understanding, to assess where we agree and where we disagree, the progress we have made and what work needs to be done.

Space severely precluded me from asking every pluralist (whose members have increased exponentially since 2009!) and my sincere apology for not including more voices. Given severe space constraints I put together what I hope is a representative mix of students, just beginning their journey into economics, and well-established pluralist thinkers, while also striving for geographical and gender balance. Included in this roundtable discussion are: two doctoral students actively involved in the rethinking economics movement; one doctoral student leading the PEPS (the French student-led group reforming the French national economics curriculum); five well-known retired economics professors (four officially emeritus) from three different continents; one prolific researcher; two department chairs, one philosopher, and one professor of economics. All share a common passion for pluralism.

Space also precluded me from asking every pertinent question about pluralism, forcing me to limit my questions to just eight. I suffer no illusion that these were the only

possible questions to ask, and that only these questions could elucidate thoughts on pluralism.

The participants, along with a brief bio, are listed below in alphabetical order, followed by a listing of the eight questions. Then each question is answered separately by each respondent. I only corrected typos, without editing either length, or content. To reduce clutter and ease readability, I relegated all references to the end of the dialogue; and there are no footnotes, although at times, I took liberty to elaborate/elucidate on points made.

Obviously, this dialogue is not the first on pluralism, nor will it be the last; rather I hope this dialogue will precipitate reflection, discussion and further work.

Pluralist roundtable participants (in alphabetical order)

Sudipta Bhattacharyya (India) is Professor and Chair, Department of Economics and Politics, Visva-Bharati University, Santiniketan. Supdita. His most recent book is *Two Decades of Market Reform in India: Some Dissenting Views* (Anthem Press, 2013). He has also published in a wide variety of journals including *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, *Journal of Peasant Studies*, *Journal of Agrarian Change*, *Journal of South Asian Development*, *Economic and Political Weekly*, etc. He is currently working on the political economy of agrarian change in India, and rural local self-governance.

Kamilla Buchter (Denmark) is currently pursuing her doctoral studies at the London School of Economics. She has a BA in Philosophy and a BSc in Mathematical Economics from Copenhagen University; and a MSc in the Philosophy of the Social Sciences from the London School of Economics. Her research interests include philosophy of economics, scientific modelling, decision theory, and probability theory. She is currently researching how to choose between, and evaluate scientific models that can potentially change human behaviour.

Victoria Chick (UK) is an Emeritus Professor of Economics at University College, London. Her work is to be found in three books: *The Theory of Monetary Policy* (1973 and 1977); *Macroeconomics after Keynes: A Reconsideration of The General Theory* (1983); and *On Money, Method and Keynes: Selected Essays of Victoria Chick* (Arestis and Dow, 1992); and in articles on monetary theory and policy, methodology and the economics of Keynes. She was co-founder of the Post-Keynesian Economics Study Group and is an honorary life member of that group and the Association for Heterodox Economics. She is a member of the Skidelsky Committee for Economics Curriculum Change, and an adviser to the Post-Crash Economics (Manchester).

Malgorzata Dereniowska (Poland) is an associated member of Greqam, Aix-Marseille University, France. She earned her Doctoral degree in Philosophy from the Institute of Philosophy, Adam Mickewicz University, Poland in 2012. The title of her dissertation is 'On values of nature from the perspective of pluralistic environmental ethics'. Her research interests include environmental ethics, economic philosophy, theories of justice, pluralism in ethics and in social sciences, and sustainability economics. She has published several articles and book chapters on a variety of topics in environmental ethics and sustainable development.

Sheila Dow (UK) is Emeritus Professor of Economics at the University of Stirling in Scotland and Adjunct Professor of Economics at the University of Victoria in Canada. Her most recent book is *Foundations for New Economic Thinking*, Palgrave Macmillan 2012. She is a Co-editor of the WEA's online journal, *Economic Thought*.

Arturo Hermann (Italy) is a Senior Research Fellow at the Italian National Institute of Statistics (Istat), Rome, Italy. Within his main research fields of institutional and Keynesian economics, political economy, and sustainable development, he has authored five books and numerous articles in scholarly journals. His latest book is *The Systemic Nature of the Economic Crisis: The Perspectives of Heterodox Economics and Psychoanalysis* (Routledge, 2015).

Julie A. Nelson (USA) is a Professor of Economics at the University of Massachusetts Boston, and is an active member of feminist, ecological, social, and mainstream economics networks. She is the author of *Economics for Humans* (2006), as well as other books and textbooks, and articles in journals including *Feminist Economics*, *Ecological Economics*, *Journal of Economic Methodology*, the *Review of Social Economy*, *Econometrica*, and the *Journal of Economic Perspectives*.

Hoang Nguyen (Vietnam) is applying for graduate studies at The University of Sydney. As an undergraduate at the University College, London, he was a founding member of UCL's Better Economics Society, Rethinking Economics (he was a lead organiser in the recent RT London conferences) and the International Student Initiative for Pluralism in Economics. In 2004, he was voted one of the Ten Best Vietnamese People of the Year.

Steve Keen (UK) is the Head of the School of Economics, History, and Politics, at Kingston University. He was one of the handful of economists to realise that a serious economic crisis was imminent, and to publicly warn of it, from as early as December 2005. This, along with his pioneering work on complex systems modelling of debt-deflation won him the Revere Award from the *Real World Economics Review* for being the economist "who first and most clearly anticipated and gave public warning of the Global Financial Collapse and whose work is most likely to prevent another GFC in the future". Steve maintains an influential blog on economics (<http://www.debtdeflation.com/blogs>) and his book *Debunking Economics* sets out the many formal critiques of neoclassical economics in a manner that is accessible to the intelligent non-academic reader. He also writes a online column for *Forbes Magazine* (<http://www.forbes.com/sites/stevekeen/>).

Maria Madi (Brazil) holds a MSc in Philosophy and a PhD in Economics. She is former Professor and Coordinator of the pluralist undergraduate course in Economics at UNICAMP/Brazil; and is currently the Chair of the World Economics Association (WEA) Conferences, Co-editor of the WEA Pedagogy Blog and Assistant Editor of the *International Journal of Pluralism and Economics Education*. In 2013, she lead the WEA Conference on Economics Curriculum and co-edited the book *The Economics Curriculum: Towards a Radical Reformulation* (2014). She is currently writing a principles of economics textbook with co-authors Molly Scott Cato and Jack Reardon.

Peter Söderbaum (Sweden) is a Professor Emeritus at the Mälardalen University, Västerås, Sweden. His research focuses on ecological economics, i.e., economics for sustainable development. Söderbaum (2008) is member of the Editorial Advisory Boards of Ecological Economics and the *IJPEE*. He has published extensively. His book *Understanding Sustainability Economics – Towards Pluralism in Economics* has been widely read around the world.

Frank Stilwell (Australia) is a Professor Emeritus in Political Economy at the University of Sydney, Australia. As a young Lecturer there, he was a leading participant in a joint student-staff struggle for pluralist economics education. He has taught for four decades in the comprehensive political economy program that resulted from the struggle, twice winning University Awards for Teaching Excellence. He has written 12 books including the pluralist textbook, *Political Economy: the Contest of Economic Ideas*.

Laurène Tran (France, PEPS) is an Erasmus Mundus Master's student in knowledge and innovation policies at Sorbonne Paris Cité in France. She is an organiser for PEPS-Économie (Pour un Enseignement Pluraliste dans le Supérieur en Économie), a non-profit students' association that crafted the Global Open Letter of the International Student Initiative for Pluralism in Economics. In English, PEPS has published, 'The case for pluralism: what French undergraduate economics teaching is all about and how it can be improved', in the *IJPEE*.

Pluralist roundtable questions

- 1 How would you define pluralism in economics?
- 2 In reading Fred Lee's *History of Heterodox Economics – Challenging the Mainstream* (Routledge, 2009), I was struck by both the persistent calls for pluralism and the stubborn resistance and visceral parrying by neoclassical economists (NCEs). Is there an underlying reason for this tenacity in either neoclassical economics, or in the way we educate economists? Can neoclassical economics ever become pluralist?
- 3 Is heterodox economics consistent with pluralism?
- 4 In 2000, French students petitioned their professors demanding more pluralism within the economics curriculum. Since that clarion call, do you feel progress has been made? Speaking from either a regional or global perspective, is economics currently more pluralist? What remains to be done?
- 5 Do you feel the case for pluralism has been theoretically made and empirically proved?
- 6 What books or specific articles would you recommend to economics instructors interested in implementing pluralism?
- 7 What advice would you give to students thinking about majoring in economics?
- 8 Is there anything you would like to add, not addressed in the above questions?

Responses to pluralist dialogue questions

Question 1 How would you define pluralism in economics?

Sudipta Bhattacharyya (India):

In simplest terms pluralism in economics attempts to accommodate all schools of thought in the curriculum, even if these schools contest each other; however, when teachers and students strive for pluralism, it can become a movement of dissenting views that are being suppressed by the monist, mainstream neoliberal ideology.

Kamilla Butcher (Denmark):

Pluralism can be an influential part of economics in three areas. First, I see pluralism in economic research as openness towards theories, models, and representational forms that are not considered part of heterodox economics. Second, I define pluralism in teaching economics as the willingness of professors and teachers to teach a more diverse curriculum, and to stress that looking at the world through economic theories gives us a specific perspective which does not necessarily accurately depict the world. Finally, I see pluralism in applied economics as an openness towards using different economic approaches and a willingness to add other perspectives to one's economic reasoning, or when making policy recommendations.

Victoria Chick (UK):

Using more than one theoretical framework to address any given economic question or issue.

Malgorzata Dereniowska (Poland):

The question of definition is always basic, being an important subject of debate and research. It is not surprising, however that I agree with the political philosopher Peter Lassman that we should expect some pluralism about pluralism (and any other concept in science, for that matter). In my understanding, the debate about pluralism in economics certainly goes beyond the descriptive realm, and is conditioned by underlying ontological and epistemological presuppositions. Pluralism in economics is about something more than just recognising that there are diverse schools of thought, diverse methodologies, etc. Rather, it also engages questions of ideology (in Peter Söderbaum's understanding of this concept), the subjective worldviews of scientists, power positions, and elements of the (dominant) discourse(s) of the community of economists, which set the standards for what is accepted as truth, what delineates good versus bad science, or even what is the very subject of economics. Differences just in one of these elements can generate profound differences in accounting for pluralism and the need for it in economics.

Back to the question of definition: from a philosophical point of view, I think that the most interesting kind of pluralism is that which generates rationally irreducible differences on the level of judgement about particular cases. Recognising complexity as an immanent feature of reality implies that more than one single answer to questions exist, and in some cases there are no rational rules for adjudicating which is more true. Analysis of any complex system can encounter this problem. Translating this definition into our context, it means that in some applied case study, more than one solution and

recommendation can be made, and in some cases, decision procedures need to be developed in order to make an informed choice. This approach to pluralism encompasses the various levels of the ontological, epistemological, methodological, and theoretical. Although it is possible, for example, to be a theoretical monist while practicing methodological pluralism, the pluralistic attitude implies openness toward various levels of pluralism. One can point to the attitude of tolerance as a necessary component of a true pluralist approach, but that should not be equated with eclecticism, an anything-goes approach, and the inability to choose between various alternatives (be it on the level of theory, methodology, or method).

Pluralism that prevents decision making (be it a methodological choice or a choice between various alternative solutions to a particular problem) is ill-conceived, as it does not bring any progress in science or in real-world matters. Thus, pluralism implies a certain reflexive attitude and competencies necessary to deal with complexity. Acceptance of pluralism per se does not guarantee a conclusive dialogue among various options since there are different approaches to pluralism. Thus, there are some additional conditions to pluralism that need to be addressed in order to ensure the possibility of cooperation in a world of situated knowledge, plural values, in which no final everlasting consensus on all matters of substance can be always achieved. These conditions need to be addressed when considering any particular definition of pluralism in economics.

I would add (as a matter of not closing but rather opening up the discussion) that to me, the debate about pluralism in economics is underlined, in addition to different ideological orientations, by different types of rationality. Whereas NCEs endorse a substantive conception of rationality, a pluralist approach, as advocated here implies a procedural conception of rationality. There is a two-fold reason for this. Firstly, as we sometimes deal with rationally irreducible solutions to problems in question, we need to develop procedures for decision rules. Secondly, the procedural aspect of pluralism is inevitable once we acknowledge that many scientific questions engage not just with facts, but also values, and that there are justified requirements of consistency, knowledge integration, and progress.

Sheila Dow (UK):

The main meaning of pluralism (as I understand it) refers to the view that a range of different approaches to knowledge about the economy is bound to arise, given the open nature of the subject matter, and that these approaches can legitimately coexist. The minimal form of pluralism in this sense (methodological pluralism) is to accept this plurality (itself an important step); the stronger form is to advocate it as a more robust approach to knowledge than mainstream monism. There are other, more limited, forms of pluralism which refer to plurality of theories and of methods, but generally within any one approach. A final form of pluralism refers to plurality in the subject matter itself, although ontology is not often discussed explicitly in these terms.

Arturo Herman (Italy):

I would define pluralism as a precise theoretical and methodological perspective in economics. Such a perspective rests on acknowledging the manifold and interrelated dimensions of economic phenomena, which, for this reason, requires the critical contributions of many approaches and disciplines. As observed by the famous sociologist

Karl Mannheim, a landscape can be seen only from a determined perspective and without perspective there is no landscape. Hence, for researchers, observing a landscape (or phenomenon) from different angles (or disciplines) can produce a much clearer insight into the features that contribute to a better appraisal of the specific characteristics of their main fields of specialisation.

Steve Keen (UK):

Effectively it is an acknowledgement that there is no empirically justified over-arching theory of economics, and that until such time as one emerges, all schools of thought deserve to be taught – warts and all. There is then a judgement call as to which ones to cover in the limited time afforded by an educational curriculum – especially an undergraduate one – in which case I see the Neoclassical, Austrian (treating not merely Hayek but also Schumpeter as Austrians) and Post-Keynesian schools as the core ones to cover. At the same time, I believe we need to teach issues that we know are needed in economics but are not covered well by any of these three schools, and the dominant issue of our times that these three schools do not adequately cover is the ecological one.

Maria Madi (Brazil):

Traditional epistemological theories have fostered an endless debate on dichotomies characterised by forms of objectivism, on the one hand, and forms of relativism/scepticism on the other. Currently, among the deep global social and cultural challenges, the crisis in epistemology is characterised by a radical questioning of the whole matrix within which such dichotomies have been drawn. In truth, as highlighted by Edward Fullbrook and Sheila Dow, among others, Cold War epistemologies with the notion of positive science have come to an end in a real-world that is more complex.

Indeed, pluralism in economics urgently calls for an epistemological change in economic science. Pluralism in economics is about the consideration of different theoretical approaches aimed at apprehending and understanding the real world; and pluralism is aware of the constant movement of construction, reconstruction and renewal of ideas and concepts. Time and space are not neglected as they shape the possibilities of observation, analysis and interpretation of the main economic issues that configure the societies where individuals live.

Finally, the need for trans-disciplinary and interdisciplinary work is highlighted in pluralist approaches. Considering this background, a pluralist education in economics is an ‘embedded education’, that is to say, the economic curriculum should be embedded in historical, political, social and cultural scenarios.

Julie Nelson (USA):

The practice of approaching issues in economics (defined around the broad issue of provisioning) using a variety of perspectives and tools of analysis.

Hoang Nguyen (Vietnam):

Pluralism, I feel, is about the willingness to accept and respect the fact that there is a variety of different schools of thought in economics, each of which has something to offer, or inform the general debate. Pluralism is also about the willingness to engage in

open, critical, and constructive discussions with your opponents, so that both sides have a better understanding of the complex human system we call the economy.

Peter Soderbaum (Sweden):

I guess that most economists have preferences with respect to theoretical perspective in economics. At issue is how the economist relates to other perspectives than the one(s) she or he prefers. Does a specific economist as actor respect other paradigms? Does our economist think in terms of Kuhnian ‘paradigm-shift’, or what I call ‘paradigm coexistence’? It is not necessarily a matter of ‘either-or’ but may alternatively be understood in ‘both-and’ terms. The understanding offered by one paradigm (school) may add to the understanding offered by a previously existing paradigm.

But the main reason to advocate pluralism in economics has to do with values (ideology) and democracy. Each paradigm in the social sciences (such as economics) is specific in value/ideological terms. If there is a monopoly for one paradigm in economics with its specific ideological orientation, then we have problems in relation to democracy. Heterodox schools do not exist only in a limited scientific sense with their truth claims. In many cases (feminist economics, ecological economics), they exist and respond to different ideological orientations in the larger society than the ideological orientation built into orthodox or mainstream economics. As I see it, if an economist (orthodox or heterodox) claims to respect democracy (and is critical to dictatorship) then he or she has to accept and advocate pluralism.

It is clear that the issue ‘pluralism versus neoclassical monopoly’ is a political issue. At some stage politicians and other actors in society, e.g., journalists, may understand this political/ideological aspect of economics and then intervene to facilitate the process towards pluralism.

Frank Stilwell (Australia):

The exploration of diverse ‘ways of seeing’ economic issues in a manner that challenges the ‘conventional wisdom’ of orthodox economics.

Laurène Tran, PEPS-Economie, (France):

When using the term ‘pluralist’, in our advocacy for a pluralist teaching of economics, we refer to a three-fold definition of pluralism:

- Theoretical pluralism

Theoretical pluralism reflects on the nature of economics, as a set of divided and often contradictory theories. Theoretical pluralism, when applied to teaching, means explaining both the established paradigm and alternative approaches.

Such approaches are autonomous and cannot be absorbed by the established dominant paradigm; criticisms of the established paradigm by alternative approaches – as convincing as it might be – does not constitute the core of their theoretical contribution. In fact, a good understanding of approaches that do not belong to the established paradigm does not require any exposure to standard economic theories. Therefore, we claim that alternative approaches can be taught as early as in introductory courses. The improvement and refinement of the established paradigm should not be used to legitimate the exclusion of alternative approaches.

- Reflexive pluralism

Reflexive pluralism helps to mobilise the power of hindsight in understanding economics. Reflexive pluralism in teaching means offering courses that encourage reflection on economics as a discipline – on its methods and assumptions, as well as on its contingency. Such courses would focus on the history of economic thought and facts as well as the epistemology of economics.

- Disciplinary pluralism

This has two features: methodology and pluri-disciplinarity – one cannot exist without the other. Disciplinary pluralism means that the methods of the humanities and the other social sciences, that is, sociology, philosophy, political science, geography, history, and psychology, should be taught and incorporated into the economist's toolkit alongside quantitative methods. A strong command of quantitative tools is necessary for a rigorous study of economic phenomena. Nevertheless, we call for additional training in qualitative methods drawn from the other social sciences – archival work, sociological survey, etc.

Moreover, pluri-disciplinarity applies a cross-disciplinary approach to exploring economic issues. The addition of methods drawn from other social sciences to the existing methodology of standard economics is essential if one wants to avoid an incomplete pluri-disciplinarity.

In our definition of pluralism, this three-fold understanding forms a united whole.

Question 2 In reading Fred Lee's *History of Heterodox Economics – Challenging the Mainstream* (Routledge, 2009), I was struck by both the persistent calls for pluralism and the stubborn resistance and visceral parrying by NCEs. Is there an underlying reason for this tenacity in either neoclassical economics, or in the way we educate economists? Can neoclassical economics ever become pluralist?

Sudipta Bhattacharyya (India):

For all practical purposes, it has been found that neo-classical economics is reluctant to co-exist with other schools of thought.¹ There are two problems. First, methodologically, given neoclassical economics preoccupation with Marshallian partial and Walrasian general equilibrium; it is difficult to accommodate other heterodox ideologies like socialist, Marxian, institutional, evolutionary, Georgist, Austrian, feminist, social, post-Keynesian and ecological economics. But the latter schools can accommodate themselves in a single syllabi. Secondly, neoclassicism as a methodology comports with neo-liberalism, the ruling ideology of global capitalism. In particular, methodological individualism comfortably comports with the ideology of corporatisation. This gives neoclassicism patronage from banks and corporations. Accordingly, as a part of corporate governance of modern capitalism, neoclassicism is forcefully introduced from above, and affects recruitment and promotion of faculty members. The pampered and arrogant neoclassicism with its global hegemony is thus reluctant to accommodate. It only knows how to spread the inferno of monism after swallowing all the fertile fields of

interdisciplinary teaching and research.² Therefore, neo-classicism can never be pluralistic.

Kamilla Butcher (Denmark):

I have not read this book, and I would not claim to be an expert on this issue. However, I think we have to tread carefully here. We have to remember that neoclassical economics is relatively new; thus it seems to me that we are not able to judge whether neoclassical economics will at some point incorporate a pluralistic perspective. However, if we want to further the development of pluralistic economics this might be done by teaching economics in a way that acknowledges plural theories, stresses the fallibility of economic theories, and teaches students about the history and development of economic theory.

Victoria Chick (UK):

NCEs believe that they have the one true model/theory of economics. Anything else is a challenge to their authority. The theory itself is based on perfect knowledge and closed-system, deductive reasoning. The results are supposed to be ‘institution-free’ and therefore universal. Thus we see immediately that their world is a fantasy. It is easy to see, from the structure of the theory, why alternatives must be defeated. We tend to educate economics students in an authoritarian way – or at least NCEs do. It befits their theory, and it leaves the student in no position to question the validity or relevance of that theory. (Alan Freeman calls this monothereticism.)

Malgorzata Dereniowska (Poland):

In my view, the question of pluralism in economics is not just a question of substance with purely scientific content, but it engages very much the questions of politics within the academia, power, ideology, and the like. The demarcating line that constitutes a real difference between the orthodox and heterodox communities is drawn in line with more subtle normative and political dimensions that influence ontological and epistemological positions.

Thus, I would say that becoming pluralist is not so much a matter of theoretical conviction (i.e., it may not be enough to present the anti-pluralist groups with solid theoretical and empirical foundations for pluralistic research and practice), but rather of adopting a certain normative and ideological stance. These certainly are reflected in the way economists are taught.

I think that in speculating and anticipating what might take place in the future, the starting point is to analyse and try to articulate the mechanisms and forces at play that constitute the phenomena. These go beyond the scientific knowledge itself, including the context in which knowledge is produced and in which scientists operate.

Prominent Polish philosopher Mieczysław Krąpiec (1991) claimed that the richness of philosophical questions and insights, however diverse, always boils down to issues pertaining to the monism and pluralism debate – a debate which is as old as philosophy itself. In many ways, the existence of this debate is no different in economics than other disciplines, although there are shifts in discussion from issues such as the acceptance of pluralism and its consequences to more subtle questions of what pluralism implies. For example, in philosophy no one objects to the value and cultural pluralism, but there remain serious, though yet inconclusive, debates about how to approach this pluralism,

whether it implies relativism and an anything-goes stance toward values, or whether we should speak about hierarchies of values and highest goods. These philosophical debates converge with questions raised in economic valuation of natural goods and services. Indeed, I think that the stakes in the pluralism/monism debate can be consistently distinguished across disciplines, as their elements have practical import and constitute broader attitudes about how to do science. Drawing from historical dialectics, one might suspect that there will be always a clash and co-existence between pluralist and anti-pluralist positions – if not in a crude either/or form, then certainly pertaining to some more subtle issues engaged in this distinction – but the question of proportions and what will be constituting the split may dynamically change.

Sheila Dow (UK):

When NCEs spell out their methodological approach, it tends to be a form of logical positivism whereby theories deduced from self-evident axioms are tested by (objective) facts. The implication is that it is possible to decide on the best theory. This methodological approach is not given a justification, but rather is apparently assumed to be the most ‘scientific’. By implication, any other approach is less scientific and therefore should not be tolerated. As long as this view persists, there will be no room for methodological pluralism in mainstream economics. (There is however scope for theoretical pluralism reflecting the different branches of mainstream economics, but within a common methodological approach). The most common place to find statements about the mainstream methodological approach is introductory textbooks, so it is embedded in a mainstream economics training.

While economists’ aspirations to be ‘scientists’ on a par with physical scientists can explain a lot of the prevailing monism, other factors are also at work. Within the discipline, methodological criteria can be used as an exercise of power in terms of publication outlets, hiring and funding, perpetuating mainstream dominance. In turn, external forces aiming to perpetuate neo-liberalism support mainstream economics as providing a ‘scientific’ rationalisation.

Arturo Herman (Italy):

There are two reasons for this behaviour. One refers to a kind of a ‘matter of fact’ attitude, which, of course, can be reinforced by a psychological difficulty or fear to address the complex aspects of real phenomena: in the opinion of many, a pluralistic approach seems very promising, but risks ending up in a general melting pot, a situation in which everybody speaks their own language and goes their own way without any fruitful interaction. This danger is real, and should always be kept in mind by the social scientist. How can it be reduced? An effective way to promote scientific dialogue is to improve the process of social valuing, by making more explicit the set of beliefs, values and motifs underlying any ‘scientific’ vision and methodology. In this sense, even if it could be expedient in some instances to simplify the working hypotheses, the reasons underlying such choice, together with the implications for the analysis, should be clearly indicated (I will expand on this below). And, moreover, I would add, this process of simplification should be kept to a minimum. It should be the exception, and not the rule, as it happens today.

Another reason is neoclassical theory leaves little room for pluralism, because such theory is based on ‘prime postulates’ coupled with a positivistic conception of empirical

analysis, according to which only measurable phenomena can claim ‘scientific status’. However, as quantitative enquiry alone cannot reach the ‘soul and the heart’ of the phenomena, the implicit philosophical and psychological foundations underpinning the basic principles of the theory can never be questioned; thus, even if quantitative data – e.g., evidence of gross market imperfections – contravenes the theory, it can easily be claimed that these phenomena are ‘exceptions’ and/or are due to ‘exogenous’ factors.

The positivist methodology, however, has severe shortcomings. In fact, when we study, for instance, consumer and firm behaviour, we are dealing with the behaviour of persons, in their individual and collective dimensions, which are highly specific to each situation. For this reason – and in order to avoid the well-known danger of simplification and reductionism – a plurality of methodology is required for a comprehensive analysis of the various aspects (and interpretative theories) of the issues at hand. Hence, statistical information should always be coupled with case studies, historical analysis, and other methods for acquiring more ‘direct and qualitative’ data and information on the phenomena under investigation.

Steve Keen (UK):

I see neoclassical economics as a form of mathematical utopianism. In its pure form it envisages a world in which there is no power, no coercion of any kind, out of which emerges a meritocracy in which people receive in direct proportion to their contribution to society. It is an anarchist vision of perfection, and at the same time it appears to be derived from a mathematics rather than from a belief system.

Utopian visions are incredibly appealing to the human species, and I believe this influences how NCEs defend their analysis. In particular, it makes them resistant to facts about the world not compatible with their belief system – such as, e.g., ignoring the overwhelming empirical evidence that marginal costs are constant or falling for the vast majority of firms.

It also makes them very aggressive towards other approaches to economics – treating them as unscientific because they do not subscribe to the neoclassical method. Here, I agree with Arnsperger and Varaoufakis (2006) that neoclassical economics is characterised by meta-axioms – though to their nomination of ‘methodological individualism, methodological instrumentalism and methodological equilibration’, I would add ‘methodological barter’.

To become truly pluralist, they would need to acknowledge that economics can be practiced without subscribing to any of these meta-axioms. I seriously doubt their ability to do that.

Maria Madi (Brazil):

After World War Two, economics was broadly understood as economic science, that is to say, as a specific area of the development of human knowledge. After the 1970s, in the context of the debate relative to the views and perspectives of scientific knowledge, the transformations that economics has undergone revealed that a ‘mortal sin’ underlies both orthodox approaches. Although mainstream economists have proposed more complex pictures with limited rationality, changing institutions and path-dependent outcomes, this is teleological and cannot cope with the full apprehension of current transformations. Taking this into account, we can say, even today, that mainstream economists privilege positivism, deductivism, mathematical modelling and methodological individualism.

Thus, the Kuhnian notion of a single dominant paradigm still encourages an ‘all-or-nothing’ view of intellectual change. As a result, these foundations are inconsistent with pluralism.

Julie Nelson (USA):

Neoclassical economic theory could be just one tool in the toolbox, serviceable in the quest for knowledge in limited cases. However, neoclassical economics as a hegemonic practice reflects bigger – and more perverse – aspirations. One of these is physics-envy: economists tend to want to be associated with the (stereotypically) ‘masculine’, ‘hard’, and abstract sciences, while disassociating themselves from more ‘feminine’ and ‘soft’ topics and methods, such as those used in sociology, and from practice that is concrete and engaged with the real world. This bias severely limits the quality and usefulness of the resulting work. The second aspiration has nothing to do with the quest for knowledge, and everything to do with the quest for wealth and power. By disengaging with real world problems (such as poverty, inequality, environmental degradation, instability, and war) and deflecting attention instead towards mathematical games or mythical ‘free markets’, practitioners of hegemonic neoclassical economics serve some important and wealthy powers-that-be, and are therefore more likely to be rewarded by them than punished.

Hoang Nguyen (Vietnam):

Apart from sociological reasons (senior professors do not want to admit that their life-work is wrong, junior professors, and/or lecturers do not want to lose their jobs by going against the tide, etc.), I would like to offer another reason why NCEs are resistant to change. Recently, I read Backhouse’s (2010) book, *The Puzzle of Modern Economics: Science or Ideology?* in which he argues that neoclassical economics became mainstream not as a result of some grand ideological plots by the right-wingers (it is noteworthy to remember that NCEs are represented across the political spectrum and a lot of them are actually left-leaning), but actually was the result of the consistent drive by economists to make their ‘science’ more ‘scientific’. Unfortunately, economists have a very distorted definition of what is ‘science’ as well as what is ‘scientific’ which is why we have arrived at such a sorry state. I am not going to elaborate further on this phenomenon, which a lot of people have, rightly or wrongly, called physics-envy, since it is well-documented, but I would argue that the lack of training in, or worse, the deliberate neglect of methodology and the philosophy of science literature has indeed resulted in economists having a very misguided idea of what constitutes good ‘science’, which then helped propel neoclassical economics to its current status and to disregard other schools of thought as ‘unscientific’. Unless mainstream economists renounce that ‘science’ has to include a lot of maths (even if it is useless to the task at hand), that mathematical modelling is the ONLY ‘scientific’ way to conduct economic investigations and that all economic models need firm microfoundations in order to be ‘rigorous’, I cannot see how they can be open or receptive to suggestions from other schools of thought, or for that matter, other useful research methods from other social sciences. In other words, it will be hard for NCEs to become pluralist unless they realise that what they were taught as graduate students was only one tool among many that can help explain the economy, and that true science means more than just constrained optimisation and multiple regression.

Peter Söderbaum (Sweden):

There are probably NCEs who will never change their mind but there are also hopefully NCEs who are more open-minded. Rather than making general statements about all NCEs we should perhaps realise that there is some heterogeneity in each actor category (Söderbaum, 1991). But statements about the tenacity of NCEs are probably largely correct and at some places this tenacity may have increased. But there are small positive changes as well, for example in the sense that mainstream economics is more often described as 'neoclassical' suggesting that there may exist other kinds of economics. Even mainstream actors may, although reluctantly, use this term.

Can neoclassical economics become pluralist? Neoclassical economics in itself is only one theoretical perspective and cannot be understood as pluralist, but neoclassical economics can become part of a pluralist understanding of economics. But there is a lot of inertia. There is the possibility of 'rent-seeking' behaviour; reference can be made to 'vested interests'; there may be laziness, etc. But if one thinks in terms of paradigm coexistence (rather than paradigm-shift) then neoclassical economics can become pluralist.

There are of course a number of larger issues involved: Is economics about truth claims, quantitative predictions or perhaps about articulating a conceptual framework that is helpful in understanding the economy and its different parts?

Frank Stilwell (Australia):

Neoclassical economics itself cannot be pluralist. At best, it can be one among many ways of seeing. But NCEs will predictably resist any challenge to their dominance within the economics profession: it would, in effect, constitute a 'demotion' from the entrenched position they have established. The training that students get in most economics departments (some critics might call it indoctrination or even cloning) reinforces the narrowness of outlook. At best, NCEs accept some variations on the 'market economy' theme, such as behavioural and experimental economics, 'new institutional' economics, new growth theory, game theory, etc. This gives the superficial appearance of some diversity while continuing to rule out the more critical ways of seeing capitalist economies from the viewpoints of Marxist, historical institutionalist and Post-Keynesian economics

Laurène Tran, PEPS-Economie, (France):

As students advocating for a pluralistic teaching of economics, we do not urge professors who identify themselves with the neoclassical paradigm to change their research agenda. We urge them to offer their undergraduate students the possibility to make their own theoretical and methodological choices in economics, that is to say, we want them to expose as many possible alternative approaches and methods to their students even when in contradiction with the neoclassical paradigm.

Having said that, the inclusion of cutting-edge research in experimental economics, game theory or behavioural economics to mention a few relatively new lines of research, in undergraduate teaching is an excellent initiative but it cannot be an alibi to exclude distinct alternative approaches such as feminist economics, 'old' institutionalist approaches, or Post-Keynesian macroeconomics, for instance.

*Question 3 Is heterodox economics consistent with pluralism?**Sudipta Bhattacharyya (India):*

Pluralism wants to include all ideologies in the curriculum, irrespective of the extent they contest each other. On the other hand, heterodox economics in all its varieties is unified in opposition to neoclassical economics. In this sense, there is some inconsistency between heterodox economics and pluralism. However, if the pluralistic approach fails to accommodate neoclassical economics and heterodox economics in a single syllabi, as has happened at most of the dominant mainstream universities, then for all practical purposes pluralism becomes totally consistent with heterodox economics.

Kamilla Buchter (Denmark):

It seems to me that heterodox economics is and has always been able and willing to consider pluralism as an important factor that should be incorporated if possible. Thus, I see no reason why heterodox economics and pluralism should be inconsistent.

Victoria Chick (UK):

The heterodoxy that I know best, Post-Keynesianism, recognises the uncertainty and partiality of human knowledge and is thus open to other interpretations as perhaps complementary to, rather than competitive with, PKE. So, yes.

Malgorzata Dereniowska (Poland):

This is a tricky question, and the answer depends on how pluralism is defined. At first glance, it seems easy to answer if we pick any kind of descriptive pluralism. For example, looking at the pluralism on the level of theory and method, then the question would be just how much pluralism we need to become ‘pluralists’. But here, I come back again to my claim that pluralism in economics is not just about descriptive pluralism. For example, one can say – by pointing to experimental economics, behavioural economics, and more recently to the interest paid to the issue of complexity in mainstream economics – that there exists some kind of pluralism (on the level of theory and method) in the mainstream. Even more interestingly, Gintis (2009) and Hédoin (2015) showed that mainstream game theory (which is generally considered to be methodologically individualistic) in fact presupposes certain institutionalist concepts. Moreover, many of those labelled by heterodoxy as NCEs would object to being called ‘neoclassical’ by pointing out that nowadays economic analysis is based on more relaxed assumptions – which is a descriptive case.

If we would dig deep enough, certainly we would find many areas of overlap between the neoclassical and heterodox schools of thought, their respective methods, and the like, and one could just simply ask the question of how much pluralism we need to delineate orthodox from heterodox scholars. But if we move to consider the stakes in the debate between pluralism and anti-pluralism movements, something strikes me as particularly important: The problem with the mainstream is not, I think, the theoretical tools that (neoclassical) economists employ; rather, it is the underlying philosophy of science and ideology, and the belief (despite the emphasis on positive analysis) that these theoretical tools are able to show how people should behave. Clearly, such an ideological stance does not stem from any model. Heterodox scholars, on the other hand, more readily take

up the analysis with its normative content. But still, there is a difference between pluralism and a pluralistic attitude: accepting and/or representing pluralism on the level of theory or method is not the same, by itself, as having a pluralistic attitude toward other theories, methods, schools of thought, or paradigms. Thus, I hesitate to draw straight dividing lines, such as that heterodoxy equals pluralism, neoclassical equals (narrow-minded) monism, or pluralism is the same as a good in itself, etc. Stereotypes (in general) can lead to biased judgements, whereas especially today – in times of multifaceted crises – we need careful and nuanced analyses and attitudes.

In my view, the answer to the question whether heterodox economics is consistent with pluralism is not about the recognition of pluralism, but the attitude toward various alternatives. Heterodox economists can be as ignorant of mainstream economics as orthodox economists can be of heterodox economics. Moreover, from a philosophical perspective, if heterodoxy is equated with the ‘anti-orthodox’ movement, it is not fully pluralistic. But one point needs to be stressed. Although a pluralistic approach implies an open, dialogical, and tolerant attitude toward alternatives, it does not mean the lack of criticism, or the lack of scholarly identity. To be a pluralist is consistent with representing one particular school of thought, while being open, tolerant, and knowledgeable about others. Thus, I would say that the point about reasonable pluralism is reflexivity, not an everything-goes, or an anti-orthodox movement. Whether heterodox economics is consistent with such an approach depends how it is practiced.

Sheila Dow (UK):

Yes – indeed Fred Lee defined heterodox economics in terms of pluralism. It goes along with an alternative definition in terms of an open-system ontology. There are some dissenters who see heterodox economics as a monist approach which is objectively superior to the mainstream. It may well be that there are some contradictions within heterodoxy which still need to be resolved. But there is more pluralism than is sometimes realised – heterodox economists recognise and discuss mainstream economics in a way which mainstream economists do not do with respect to heterodoxy. Even more they recognise other heterodox approaches than their own. There is no contradiction between pluralism and fierce argument; the need to argue for one’s own approach inevitably reflects an acceptance of alternatives as legitimate objects of critique. Pluralism is often mistaken as ‘anything goes’, whereas in my view it is perfectly consistent with making a robust case for own’s own approach. Indeed pluralism implies that all economists should be able to justify their approach.

Arturo Herman (Italy):

Yes, heterodox economics, at least Institutionalism, Marxism, and Keynesism, is intrinsically pluralistic and interdisciplinary. However, this potential is not yet fully-fledged. The main reasons for this are a tendency to fragmentation and a lack of communication often present in the heterodox domain. This tendency is reinforced by a positivistic attitude, which often harbours, in various degrees, in heterodoxy.

Consequently, there tends to be limited interchange between, for example, the features and evolution of the institutional structure underscored by institutionalists, the features and evolution of groups and classes emphasised by Marxists, and the role of effective demand and of ‘animal spirits’ pointed out by Keynesian economists.

Needless to say, these approaches provide important contributions which, however, taken in isolation, are not sufficient for fully addressing the multifariousness of socio-economic phenomena. On that account, a joint appraisal of these perspectives (each considered on its own) can greatly reinforce their interpretative potential because they underline different and relevant aspects of the same phenomena.

Steve Keen (UK):

Yes. Heterodox mainly means Post-Keynesian to those who use the term. Though there are some Post-Keynesians who are as doctrinaire as any neoclassical, in general the greater emphasis upon realism in this school means that they can be realistic about their failings – such as the failure, thus far, to properly incorporate ecological issues in Post-Keynesian economics, or the absence of an explanation of innovation in capitalism in their school, especially when compared to Schumpeter's analysis. This produces a degree of humility in the heterodox camp that is absent in the neoclassical: there is an admission that the theory is incomplete, and weak in some areas where others are strong.

Maria Madi (Brazil):

First, it is important to say that heterodox economics rejects the Cartesian approaches to ontology and epistemology; in other words, heterodox economics rejects the theorisation of knowledge under some anthropocentric foundational model of rationality, complete order and truth. That is why heterodox economics is consistent with pluralism. Concerned with a concept of pluralist knowledge, Dow's support of methodological pluralism is based on understanding reality as an open system, therefore, no knowledge or theory can capture the whole reality; each one is partial and reflects a vision of the reality. Each vision has its own foundations and must accept the legitimacy of alternative visions.

As a result, heterodox attempts have searched for linkages among theoretical approaches in order to open up new analytical perspectives to understand contemporary capitalism. Indeed, today, the relevancy of heterodox economics is based on a pluralist approach that overcomes dichotomies in economic thinking – such as neoclassical/non-neoclassical.

Julie Nelson (USA):

Maybe. Some heterodox economists are pluralist, while others are so deeply committed to their own particular views that they see any disagreement in terms of conflict or 'contending schools', rather than as a 'diversity of perspectives'.

Hoang Nguyen (Vietnam):

It will be if heterodox economists themselves are open and willing to engage in critical, constructive debates as well as learning from others.

Peter Söderbaum (Sweden):

As heterodox economists we may be as stubborn as neoclassical. But our experience from power games with neoclassicals has hopefully made us more open-minded and pluralist. I guess that many of us have complex identities in the sense of having sympathies with more than one heterodox school. I am an ecological economist as well as a classical institutionalist. And I believe that there is a role also for social and feminist economics.

Frank Stilwell (Australia):

Yes, heterodox economics must be pluralist by its very nature, since it contests a dominant orthodoxy. Many non-mainstream economists are wedded to their own preferred alternative ‘way of seeing’, of course. However, as a movement concerned with challenging orthodoxy, heterodox economists must be open to diverse alternatives from which a challenge to the neoclassical dominance may be mounted. That requires the embrace of pluralism both in principle and practice.

Laurène Tran, PEPS-Economie, (France):

Pluralism in teaching can be understood at two levels: the undergraduate curriculum, and the aggregate level (usually national). We advocate pluralism at the level of the undergraduate curriculum and following this line, heterodox economics – whatever its definition – is necessary but it is only one portion of pluralism. The presence of heterodox economics makes the curriculum pluralistic in the same way as the presence of non-heterodox economics makes the very same curriculum pluralistic.

Now say that there exist some specific curricula in ‘heterodox economics’. At the aggregate level, we would therefore have ‘pluralism’ insofar as we find both heterodox curricula and non-heterodox curricula. To have a full Post-Keynesian master in economics or graduate program dedicated to experimental economics is fine and necessary at this stage of studies but we do not think that they should feel entitled to call themselves ‘pluralistic’ just because they teach ‘non-neoclassical economics’.

Question 4 In 2000, French students petitioned their professors demanding more pluralism within the economics curriculum. Since that clarion call, do you feel progress has been made? Speaking from either a regional or global perspective, is economics currently more pluralist? What remains to be done?

Sudipta Bhattacharyya (India):

I think that significant progress has occurred since 2000. In 2001 Cambridge students also organised a petition; FEED organised a petition with over 2000 signatures in 2009; Harvard students walked out from Professor G. Mankiw’s ‘one sided presentation’ Economics Principles in 2011; in 2012 Paul Krugman and Richard Layard organised a ‘Manifesto for Economic Sense’; in 2013 Post-Crash Economics Society Manchester published a petition and formulated an alternative economics course entitled ‘Bubbles, panics and crashes: an introduction to alternative theories of crisis’ in April 2014 at Manchester University (But the economics department rejected the same); following that on May 5th, 2014, economics students from 19 countries published an ‘international student letter’ and formed ISIPE, calling for a pluralism of theories and methods; the institution ICARE to ICAPE replaced R (reform) with P (pluralism) stating that “reform does not properly characterize the nature or purpose of our organization...” These developments indicate that fundamental progress has been made since the petition by the French students in 2000.

It is difficult to say whether regional and global level economics have become more pluralistic, because in the USA and Europe, orthodoxy is imposed from above and tagged to faculty recruitment and promotion. UK’s ‘Research Assessment Exercise’ is a glaring

example of the same.³ This explains why so many petitions and student movements could not change fundamentally the existing monist structure of economics education.

The fact is that the individual protest by economics students could not make much impact unless it is associated with the social movement. For example, the development since 2008 is associated with Occupy Wall Street and other movements. Therefore, the need of the hour is to strengthen the mass movement against the disorder of capitalism.

Kamilla Butcher (Denmark):

It is definitely possible to see some changes in economics since 2000. There has been an increase in publications related to a pluralist approach to economics; and several economic textbooks with a pluralist perspective have been published. We have seen an increase in research institutes, researchers, and conferences specialising in pluralist economics, and researchers combining economics and psychology have had a significant impact on public policy. This said, old habits die hard. I think that most neoclassical economics programs taught today have not changed much in the past 15 years; thus, I think it is still possible to increase the quality of our economics degrees by increasing the level of pluralism in the curriculum.

Victoria Chick (UK):

Very little has been done. The CORE curriculum for 1st year students (led in the UK but adopted in several countries) had introduced a bit of history and real-world applications, but it has done nothing to disturb the status quo in theory. It is an attempt, in my view, to block real change.

Małgorzata Dereniowska (Poland):

Certainly, this is a multi-faceted issue, and despite some changes, more could be done to achieve progress. But if I could provide a brief answer, I would emphasise the need for competencies necessary for dealing with pluralism, uncertainty (an issue crucial, for example, for climate change economists), and risk, as well as the normative orientation of economics curriculum.

It needs to be stressed that the normative component of economics education, and education in general, is ubiquitous, even if analytically separated from, for example, the technical goals of a profit-oriented system. Values and normative ideals are unreflected and hidden, but nevertheless remain with all their implications. An illustration of this point is the economic crisis of 2008 that has resulted in growing attention to the need to redesign the role of both economics and economists in society – which explicitly raises many normative questions. The crisis has brought new challenges that expose the limits of not only current mainstream economic theory, but also of economics education. The question of the normative orientation of economics curriculum and pedagogy as well as the role of economics and economists in society calls for new perspectives. Given the unprecedented nature of today's world problems, the realisation that science does not operate in a social vacuum sheds some light also on how to educate students. We can either leave this aspect unattended, or we can attempt to design possible effects of science deliberately and reflect upon the use and social consequences of science. For what kind of ends shall economics be used? Or more precisely, should it be used deliberately for the promotion of social well-being and for preparing for a post-growth world, or should it

be employed for the sake of growth as an end in itself, leaving the larger social and ecological results to chance?

If I were to define the challenge along with a proposal for an explicit normative orientation, I would say that economics education must provide not only a plurality of knowledge, but it should work to develop a democratic attitude toward pluralism and train economists in the service of society and a just and safe future.

Sheila Dow (UK):

Without doubt progress has been made, most notably in the form of the rethinking economics organisation and its various local chapters. They and others are building up an impressive bank of materials for pluralist education. It has to be said that mainstream economics continues oblivious, or at best not appreciating what is implied by pluralism. But the pluralist economics community is much stronger now in my view, even if it has to operate in the shadow of the mainstream. Further, it may require a new generation of economists to affect change, so the student movement is the most hopeful development.

Arturo Herman (Italy):

Pluralism is gaining ground, but its widespread acceptance in the profession and in policy action is still a long way off. As already noted, the factors that most hinder this development are the fragmentation between the various strands of heterodox economics, and a prevalence of quantitative methods over a more encompassing analysis of the complexity of factors shaping economic evolution.

Steve Keen (UK):

Some progress has been made, but it took both the dogged persistence of Edward Fullbrook to keep the “Protest against Autistic Economics” rolling after 2000, and the 2008 crisis to revive student demands for reform with a vengeance.

However, there has been a paradoxical effect as well: before the crisis, non-NCEs were tolerated in many departments because they could be ignored; after the crisis, the failure of neoclassical economics to understand the economy has become visible at the level of popular debate – and this has made NCEs much more aware of the challenge posed to their hegemony by intellectual dissidents. This has led to an increased level of intolerance towards alternative views in many economics departments, which has further marginalised the odd Post-Keynesian, Marxist or Feminist economist within their ranks.

Overall, there has been substantial progress however, since the public is now aware that there are fissures within economics, and they are far more sceptical about mainstream economics than they were before the crisis. This is a fertile time for non-mainstream economists, but the biggest successes will come off-campus and the biggest challenges to the continued existence of non-mainstream thought are on-campus.

Maria Madi (Brazil):

Since the French petition, pluralism has become increasingly accepted as a method of teaching. In 2014, The World Economics Association (WEA) published the book “The economics curriculum: toward a radical reformulation” (2014). The idea of the book originated with a successful WEA online conference

(curriculumconference2013.worldeconomicassociation.org). The volume was conceived with current and future economics students in mind, since they will be the economists of the future. One of the book's main ideas is that being an economist in the 21st century requires a radical change in the training of economists, and such change requires a global effort. A new economics curriculum is needed in order to improve the understanding of the deep interactions between economics and the political forces and the historical processes of social change. The need for trans-disciplinary and interdisciplinary work is highlighted. Discussions include main critiques of current practices on theory, methods and structures, in addition to the current gaps in the economics curriculum and proposals for reformulation.

In a regional perspective, considering the Brazilian experience, the expansion of undergraduate courses in economics was followed by the emergence of a consensus around the definition of a minimum curriculum standard. Since 1984, a minimum curriculum standard has incorporated history, quantitative methods, and the awareness of diverse schools of thought within economics. This proposal had three objectives: pluralism, solid theoretical foundations and commitment to reality. Such pluralism is aware of the limitation of the universality of economic laws. As a result, economics education has focused on the apprehension of the social, cultural and political restrictions to the objectivity of economic laws.

In spite of these efforts, the concern about the global reduction of the number of students in economics requires an urgent and deeper debate between academics and professionals around pluralist education in economics.

Julie Nelson (USA):

I think the student movements, including the one that started in 2000, the more recent international Rethinking Economics wave, and a number of smaller university- or national- scope protests, are great, and create a ray of hope. In terms of the institutionalised discipline, however, I so far see little change. If the profession can get through the emperor-has-no-clothes event of not only not predicting the 2008 housing/financial/global crisis, but having contributed to it (with theories of 'efficient markets', etc.), a few upset students are not going to budge it easily.

Hoagn Nguyen (Vietnam):

In many ways, yes and no. Yes, because the struggle by students in Paris sparked an international movement to reform economics education (see Post-Autistic economics), which still inspires many student groups fighting for pluralism that have blossomed since the unfortunate events of 2007 (see Rethinking Economics and the International Student Initiative for Pluralism in Economics).⁴ No, because in many ways, the undergraduate economics curriculum still remains pretty much the same since the days Paul Samuelson wrote his influential 'Economics' textbook in 1948. A lot of mainstream economists would like us to believe that economics has moved on and incorporated insights from other sciences (behavioural economics for example) and hence became more pluralist. However, the benchmark of an efficient, tend-to-equilibrium economy comprising lots of socially independent, rational economic agents still remains as much as the unfortunate neglect of economic history and history of economic thought.

Peter Söderbaum (Sweden):

I think pluralism is taken seriously in some circles, but nevertheless, in spite of continued calls for change from students, progress has been limited. The dialogue has to continue through books, journals, etc. And when politicians and other actors understand how pluralism in economics is connected with democracy things may happen. I am an optimist after all.

Frank Stilwell (Australia):

The post-autistic economics movement that originated in France was significant, but I do not think it led to much tangible change in economics education or economic policies. The minor reforms that mainstream economics have been willing to countenance normally involve little more than improved teaching of essentially the same stuff. Because the fundamental problems remain, therefore so do the challenges. Indeed, challenges occurred many times before the French students got organised in 2000 and they have been ongoing pretty much ever since, e.g., the post-crash economics society movement in the UK; the walk out at Harvard from Mankiw's lecture following the GFC and the Occupy Movement, etc. So long as mainstream economics remains closed to views that could better illuminate how the world actually works, these challenges will surely continue. Much remains to be done...

Laurène Tran, PEPS-Economie, (France):

In a two-pronged paper published in the *IJPEE*⁵, we offered an evidence-based assessment of the worrying lack of pluralism in the French undergraduate economics curricula. The near absence of reflexive approaches, the quasi-domination of quantitative methods and standard microeconomics and macroeconomics combined with the lack of theoretical, methodological and disciplinary pluralism is pervasive.

Our group has designed a curriculum, semester-by-semester for the typical three year French undergraduate degree. We tried to show how a strong conception of pluralism can be concretely applied. Some innovations almost never seen in French curricula include courses on history of economics thoughts and facts, and a course devoted to analyse economic news and the teaching of qualitative methods along with quantitative ones. This year, two Parisian universities consulted us and emulated the PEPS-curriculum. They successfully managed to get additional funding to create such a bachelor's degree and we hope this to be the start of many other similar projects.

Question 5 Do you feel the case for pluralism has been theoretically made and empirically proved?

Sudipta Bhattacharyya (India):

Theoretically it is difficult to integrate neoclassicism with heterodox economics, never mind interdisciplinary integration. Perhaps the Cambridge Capital Controversy was the last interaction between heterodox and neoclassical economics. In this way pluralism is not grounded theoretically. There are some heterodox departments where neoclassical economics is taught, but not vice versa. But the co-existence of neo-classical and heterodox economics is not anywhere tranquil, therefore pluralism is not empirically proved.

Kamilla Butcher (Denmark):

Even if it is possible to argue that the failure of mainstream economists to predict the financial crisis (or when the bubble would burst) shows that mainstream economics is faulted, this is not enough to argue that pluralism is the better option. To claim this, more evidence (or at least argument) is needed. In general, it is still a matter of dispute whether it is possible to test the validity of economic theories empirically. For example, Mill (1844, p.103) argued that the main difference between natural sciences and other sciences is the possibility to conduct experiments in the former, “There is a property common to almost all moral sciences, and by which they are distinguished from many of the physical; this is, that it is seldom in our power to make experiments in them”. Also Friedman (1953), inspired by Mill, doubted the possibility to make controlled experiments in economics in his famous 1953 article. In his view, the only experiments available to economists are natural experiments. The problem with natural experiments, however, is exactly the difficulty of eliminating the most important disturbing influences. Morgan (2012, p.283) noted,

“The quality of economist’s experimental design and their real human inputs can be adduced as reasons why the results experimentalists find in their controlled situations might carry over and be considered valid in the external, that is, the uncontrolled real world. These qualities may make it possible to infer to very similar situations (in terms of behaviour, objects, rules, and circumstances) in the world, but that very same tightness of controls and the high levels of specificity involved in the laboratory experimental setup make inferences to situations and circumstances in the real world that are not exactly the same more problematic.”

Finally, Popper (1957[2002], p.132) noted an additional problem testing economic theories: reflexivity or performativity suggesting that human beings are able to, and often do, change their behaviour when they learn about theories,

“but it cannot be doubted that there are some fundamental difficulties here. In Physics, for example, the parameters of our equations can, in principle, be reduced to a small number of natural constants –a reduction which has been successfully carried out in many important cases. This is not so in economics; here the parameters are themselves in the most important cases quickly changing variables. This clearly reduces the significance, interpretability, and testability of our measurements.”

To conclude, even if possible to prove economic theories (or parts of them) empirically, I do not think that we yet have sufficient evidence to say that any economic theory has been empirically proved.

Victoria Chick (UK):

You cannot prove outside a closed system, and the very nature of the case for pluralism is open. I do not know what it would take to make the case theoretically. I think the key matter is methodological – certainty or uncertainty, perfect or imperfect knowledge (see above). I think the claim of common sense is a winner here.

Malgorzata Dereniowska (Poland):

There exist numerous arguments and proofs for pluralism – although often scattered across the interdisciplinary literature – that can provide solid grounds. But if you ask my

judgement whether the contributions to the pluralism debate are convincing enough to allow for a change in the mindset of the mainstream community of scholars, then I would point out some problems preventing a serious answer.

In my view, the question of the strength and legitimacy of the case for pluralism, on some deeper level, is not just a matter of proper, well-constructed theoretical arguments or what the empirical data proves. It is entangled in ontological and epistemological positions about how to do science, about the role of economics, or even what counts as economic and social phenomena (the latter often being delegated to sociologists). Moreover, the issues of power in the academia, the 'rules of the game', so to speak, and ideology play a profound role in evaluating the case for pluralism.

For example, many young economists are hesitant to be too 'heterodox', or to become associated with heterodox circles, as it could jeopardise their academic careers. After all, most of the world's research centres are dominated by NCEs, and indeed the anti-heterodox attitude is real. I am in some way safe to say that, because I am a philosopher who happens to work on economic philosophy (or philosophy of economics), and not a 'real' economist. I understand many of my economist colleagues who think that first they need to build a solid position in academia, and then they can afford to be completely honest about their subjective opinions (especially if they contravene the dominant discourse).

Yet, I think that the tendencies in academia that impede open deliberation and dialogue are against the spirit of science. The tendencies are part of the politics of science, but have nothing to do with what doing science is supposed to involve. Even if individually we can do little to fight this, at least we should be aware and willing to discuss it, if not as a matter of social responsibility of academia, then at least as an issue of scientific self-reflection. Indeed, I think that when discussing the theoretical and empirical cases for pluralism, we should address the conditions and context of evaluative judgements about it.

Sheila Dow (UK):

The case for pluralism has been well-made in a variety of publications, but there remains some confusion as to what exactly it means and entails (see answer to question one). I do not see any scope for empirical proof, other than the rhetoric literature's demonstration that supposedly monist mainstream economists in practice use a range of forms of argument.

Arturo Herman (Italy):

There have been several contributions that have clarified at the theoretical and empirical level the relevance of pluralism in the social sciences; however, there is still need of more awareness of its intrinsic significance for the analysis of social problems. In fact, there is the impression that often the quest for pluralism tends to be perceived more as a kind of petition principle than as a way to improve scientific enquiry. Conversely, I believe that pluralistic methodology – also in conjunction with its democratic relevance – is of special importance for ensuring a more complete scientific enquiry of economic and social phenomena.

Steve Keen (UK):

Absolutely. The crisis vindicated Hyman Minsky's Financial Instability Hypothesis, which, with its essential roles for disequilibrium, money, debt and uncertainty is as non-neoclassical as you can get. If anything, the theory lags behind the empirical validation: we still need more complete models of capitalism as a monetary system – though there are promising developments in stock flow consistent modelling and in the application of complexity theory to economics.

There is also a form of validation in the manner in which mainstream economists are trying to incorporate events like the 2008 crisis into their models by adding 'financial frictions' to their litany of sources of shocks that can derail capitalism from its 'natural' convergence to equilibrium. This is such a lame approach to incorporating finance into economics, but it is all they can do with models that presume that only 'market imperfections' can prevent the convergence to equilibrium.

Maria Madi (Brazil):

In my opinion, a real-world approach to economics is necessarily pluralist. As economic conditions are always changing, new theoretical and empirical concerns will always emerge. However, nowadays, understanding current complex economic and social issues delineates new problems such as: the major institutional changes and the driven-forces of current structural dynamics of capitalism; the new relations between nation states, capital and labour; and the targets and possibilities of policy-making in open and interdependent economies.

As Alfred Marshall (1890 [1946], p.5) wrote in the preface to his *Principles of Economics*, "economic conditions are constantly changing, and each generation looks at its own problems in its own way". John Kenneth Galbraith pointed out economics is overwhelmed by an 'uncorrected obsolescence.' Therefore, on behalf of the overall changing problems, the attempt should be to reinforce the pluralism founded on history. In the current context of overall social and economic transformations, pluralism must face the challenge to reshape the theoretical and analytical framework to promote fruitful research.

Julie Nelson (USA):

Theory and proof have very little to do with the cause of the problem, or its solution. We could theorise and prove all day long (and have – both within economics, and in quality philosophy of science), but as long as there is an emotional pull towards being macho, and a financial pull towards careerism and serving wealthy interests, our merely intellectual arguments have little effect. I suggest that appeals for breaking down sexism and for engaging the world in an ethical manner (both of which involve appeals to emotions and our sense of who we are as full human beings) would get us further.

Hoang Nguyen (Vietnam):

Yes

Peter Söderbaum (Sweden):

I think that there are many reasons for pluralism. I count the present monopoly for neoclassical theory as one of the major problems in relation to sustainable development.

My emphasis in arguing for pluralism is on the previously mentioned democracy argument.

Frank Stilwell (Australia):

Yes, numerous books and articles have made the case (e.g., by Ed Fullbrook, Jack Reardon, John King, Andrew Mearman, my own modest contributions, etc.). Teaching where pluralist education is practiced (e.g., the Department of Political Economy at the University of Sydney)⁶ shows that it can be very successfully done. The latest issue of *The Journal of Australian Political Economy* (a special issue on heterodox economics) provides a compilation of supporting arguments and evidence.

Laurène Tran, PEPS-Economie, (France):

Everybody has been talking about pluralism in economics teaching recently. It is becoming a buzzword, but from our regional perspective (France) more work remains to be done to discuss what pluralism actually means. From a student perspective, we suggest our article “The case for pluralism: what French undergraduate economics teaching is all about and how it can be improved” in the *IJPEE*⁷. At the global level, the International Student Initiative for Pluralism in Economics (ISIPE) is proof of widespread discontent around the world. Another piece of empirical evidence is coming out soon: with other ISIPE groups, we are wrapping up an international survey of undergraduate economics curricula!

Question 6 What books or specific articles would you recommend to economics instructors interested in implementing pluralism?

Sudipta Bhattacharyya (India):

This query needs to be discussed in length and not as one item of a round table discussion.⁸ However, we can start with Reardon’s (2009) *Handbook of Pluralistic Economics Education*.

Kamilla Butcher (Denmark):

I would recommend taking a look at the textbooks developed to teach pluralistic economics [the Goodwin et al. textbooks: *Microeconomics in Context*, *Macroeconomics in Context*, and *Principles of Economics in Context*; and Reardon, Madi and Cato’s forthcoming principles text 2016).⁹ I would also recommend instructors to look at the history of economic theory: understanding how and why heterodox economics was developed might bring added perspective into teaching.¹⁰ And I recommend Hirschman (1997) *The Passions and the Interests* and Morgan (2012) *The World in the Model*.

Victoria Chick (UK):

This requires more thought than I have time for just now. There is so little. Books trying to combine Keynes and Marx are notably unsuccessful since it takes a lifetime to understand either, therefore none understands both well enough. But there must be the odd article here and there. Parts of Schumpeter’s *History of Economic Analysis* might be a good start.

Małgorzata Dereniowska (Poland):

Since other colleagues specialising in economics can give better suggestions, I would like to comment instead on a related and crucial issue: as much as we need books, articles, and textbooks that raise the inevitable question of pluralism in economics, and as much as we need an economics curriculum better adjusted to these questions – we also need to pay attention to the issues of pedagogy and the pedagogical attitudes of teachers in the classroom. I would even say that this question – which touches upon rather ‘soft’ matters such as subjective attitudes of teachers and their competencies for pluralistic capacity-building in the classroom – is somewhat foundational for implementing pluralism and a pluralistic attitude. A good teacher encourages a critical and deliberative attitude in students without indoctrinating them (which can be done with any reading, including neoclassical texts). Part of informed teaching is not only presenting students with concepts, data, and applications of particular tools, but also providing them with tools for reflexive evaluative judgement.

Economics is a practical discipline in which problem solving in a complex world is an essential element. There is a strong correlation between complexity and reasonable pluralism of perspectives. This realisation sheds some light on the difficulty and challenge of dealing not only with complex real world problems, but also with pluralism (of perspectives, schools of thought, paradigms, etc.). Not only are there diverse views on how to solve our crises, or how to define things like sustainability, but it is also the case that many of these are more or less plausible. Thus, building capacity to adopt to change in a dynamic and complex world should be an inherent, normative component of economic education, and that requires a proper pedagogical perspective.

Sheila Dow (UK):

Reardon (2009) *A Pluralist Handbook for Economics Education*; Madi and Reardon (2014) *The Economics Curriculum: Towards a Radical Reformulation*, and Jespersen and Madsen (2013) *Teaching Post-Keynesian Economics*.

Arturo Herman (Italy):

As there are too many books and articles to recommend, I am at loss to fairly select among them. In general terms, I would implement a pluralistic course by establishing the following objectives:

- 1 Learning the main characteristics of the major school of economics. This can be realised through a selected readings of the most important exponents of these schools (in particular, classical, neoclassical, Marxist, Austrian, institutionalist, and Keynesian).
- 2 Studying more recent contributions related to the various courses of study, e.g., microeconomics, macroeconomics, economic development, political economy.

This can be realised through the study, along with the use of pluralistic textbooks of selected articles and books, and by acquainting students – also through active participation – with the conferences of the following Associations: AHE, AFIT, AFEE, EAEPE, IIPPE SASE, URPE, and The Green Economics Institute.

- 3 Understanding the interdisciplinary dimension of economics. For instance, in analysing consumer behaviour, it is pertinent to stress that since such behaviour heavily depends on the psychological and social situations of the person, a study of the related disciplines appears paramount. Also when little time is available for interdisciplinary issues, a general sketch of these problems can be sufficient.
- 4 Reasoning on the policy implications of the various theories by the study of a number of contemporary policy issues.

Steve Keen (UK):

Here, we are a bit thin. I would recommend my own *Debunking Economics* (2012) as a guide to how to teach neoclassical economics with the warts highlighted rather than airbrushed, but there are very few positive texts for teaching in a pluralist way. Other popular books like Jim Stanford's *Economics for Everyone* are worthwhile to get students thinking about economics in a broad way, but I do not think there is a 'textbook for pluralism' out there – and certainly the INET-funded CORE textbook project is the antithesis of what is needed.

Overall I recommend instructors to teach from the originals: to introduce students to the works of Marx, Keynes, Hayek, Schumpeter, Minsky – and Meadows and Schumaker and Simons – and let them learn from the masters rather than textbook renditions of them.

Maria Madi (Brazil):

Several books have been written on how to teach pluralist economics, including Groenewegen's (2007) *Teaching Pluralism in Economics*, Fullbrook's (2009a) *Pluralist Economics* and Reardon's (2009) *Handbook of Pluralist Economics Education* (2009). I also recommend Keen's (2012) *Debunking Economics* and Komlos (2014) *What Every Economics Student Needs to Know and Doesn't Get in the Usual Principles Text*.

Julie Nelson (USA):

In the introductory classroom, the Goodwin et al. textbooks (*Microeconomics in Context; Macroeconomics in Context; and Principles of Economics in Context*) are a good start. They present some alternative approaches alongside the standard neoclassical content – with the neoclassical theory treated as a particular theory rather than as simply 'how the world works'.

Hoang Nguyen (Vietnam):

Fullbrook (Ed.) (2009b) *The Crisis in Economics: The Post-Autistic Economics Movement: The First 600 Days*.

Jespersen and Madsen (Eds.) (2013) *Teaching Post-Keynesian Economics*.

Madi and Reardon (2014) *A Radical Reformation of Economics Education: Educating Real World Economists*.

Mearman (2007) *Teaching Heterodox Economic Concepts*.

Rethinking Economics (2014) *Rethinking Economics Manifesto: A Direction for the Reform of Economics Education*.

Peter Söderbaum (Sweden):

I think the many books by Edward Fullbrook and also by Jack Reardon are important. Recently, I have read von Egan-Krieger's (2014) *Die Illusion wertfreier Ökonomie. Eine Untersuchung der Normativität heterodoxer Theorien*; and also Lawson's (2015) book *The Nature and State of Modern Economics*. These two books suggest that we have to deal with more schools of thought than one.

Frank Stilwell (Australia):

Modesty aside, I think my textbook, *Political Economy: the Contest of Economic Ideas* (2012) is a reasonably useful tool for instructors who want to implement pluralism in their teaching. There is lots of other material, e.g., in the *International Journal of Pluralism and Economic Education*.

Laurène Tran, PEPS-Economie, (France):

To our knowledge there is no textbook that covers the three-fold pluralisms we advocate. Readers have probably heard of the CORE-Project, the first major institutional attempt to revamp economics textbooks. However, our chapter-by-chapter review of CORE shows that although it has been presented as such, CORE is not a pluralistic curriculum in spite of some interesting features such as its topic-oriented approach. We firmly believe that there is a strong (unmet) demand for a truly pluralistic introductory textbook and we hope that readers of the *International Journal of Pluralism and Economics Education* will take up this challenge! We will be happy to get in touch with you!

Question 7 What advice would you give to students thinking about majoring in economics?

Sudipta Bhattacharyya (India):

Proper pluralistic economics education can empower the student to critically analyse capitalism and to conceptualise a superior economy and society. Students should especially study the economic history (and recent experience) of different countries.

Kamilla Buchter (Denmark):

Do it! But remember to be critical (do not accept everything as true just because your professors tell you it is).¹¹ Also, try to consider how non-economic courses can enhance your understanding of people and of what is going on in the economic world.

Victoria Chick (UK):

Unless you are at one of the very few economics departments that do teach a variety of approaches, do not do it.

Malgorzata Dereniowska (Poland):

I would encourage the philosopher's attitude: think for yourself, do not take things for granted, and always question. Do not be afraid of the lack of simple answers. Think about why you are doing what you do, and what purposes your mission serves. Critical,

adaptive thinking and a well-articulated normative orientation in (academic) practices can do more to 'save the world' than can the most advanced technologies.

Sheila Dow (UK):

I would suggest reading something about economics as a discipline, and about pluralism in particular, to get an idea about the state of economics and its possibilities. The Rethinking Economics website¹² would be a good place to start.

I would then suggest choosing a program in a department which takes (or at least includes) a pluralist approach and/or which offers an interdisciplinary program. The AHE website provides information on different programs.

Even if after investigation mainstream monism is judged to be the most attractive approach, a pluralist program provides the knowledge and analytical skills by which to understand and defend the mainstream approach. Students need to be exposed to a range of approaches in order to understand their foundations better and to decide which suits them best. But even more important is to develop skills in making the case for one approach or another, knowing that no one approach can be demonstrated conclusively to be best.

Arturo Hermann (Italy):

My advice to students is to become competent in quantitative methods, but not to rely only on them for the analysis of socio-economic issues. Just as important is the acquisition of a solid theoretical background of the major theories (or schools) in economics. This can be done by studying the most important authors of the major schools (in particular, classical, neoclassical, Marxist, Austrian, institutionalist, Keynesian). In this task, attention should be paid to their philosophical, social and psychological orientations, together with policy implications.

Considering that this activity requires time and is a demanding task also for more experienced scholars, the students can start reading selected passages of the authors more related to their spheres of interest. Other important and related ways to achieve a good knowledge of economics are:

- 1 the study of more recent contributions
- 2 attending (and possibly actively participating in) the most relevant conferences
- 3 the appraisal of the main policy options for contemporary issues.

Steve Keen (UK):

Consider a university devoted to pluralism – like Kingston or Greenwich in London; UMass Amherst, or UMKC in the USA – rather than an Ivy League University. If you're at an Ivy League – or anything else not devoted to pluralism – then agitate for reform of the curriculum, and read the non-mainstream writers in your own time.

Maria Madi (Brazil):

The objective of economics education is the comprehension of economic reality, that is to say, the understanding of the practices and ideas that support the evolution of the production and reproduction conditions of material life. The ability of economists to deal with "mankind and the ordinary events business of life", as Marshall (1890 [1946], p.1)

said, should be preceded by the recognition of the boundaries of economics and of its political dimensions as a particular knowledge oriented to social and economic development issues. I believe that economics is about building economic systems where people can live with dignity and justice.

Julie Nelson (USA):

Please do major in economics if your goal is to do something about poverty, environmental degradation, instability, and other real world problems. Understand that you will need to master a lot of math, and may often feel that what you are learning is not what you actually should be learning. You may need to create a support group that goes beyond your classmates¹³, and will need to be careful that you do not lose your gut feeling about why you wanted to be an economist in the first place. But we need people like you in the profession! On the other hand, if you just like math, please major in math. If you are simply careerist, I'd prefer you major in something else.

Hoang Nguyen (Vietnam):

Do try your best to master what you are taught but also never stop questioning them. Neoclassical economics is NOT the only way to understand the economy, and economists are certainly not the only people studying it. So try to keep an open mind, but also do not shy away from being critical. Keynes (1924, pp.321–322) once famously remarked that,

“The master-economist must possess a rare combination of gifts. He must be mathematician, historian, statesman, philosopher - in some degree. He must understand symbols and speak in words. He must contemplate the particular in terms of the general, and touch abstract and concrete in the same flight of thought. He must study the present in the light of the past for the purposes of the future. No part of man's nature or his institutions must lie entirely outside his regard. He must be purposeful and disinterested in a simultaneous mood; as aloof and incorruptible as an artist, yet sometimes as near to earth as a politician.”

I do not think I can give better advice than that.¹⁴

Peter Söderbaum (Sweden):

I think students at different universities will continue to cooperate and they will criticise introductory courses in economics and so on. The Internet can be used to point out how some universities are better than others in addressing the tensions that exist between schools of thought.

Frank Stilwell (Australia):

If you really want to understand the economy of the real world, and especially if you want to change it for the better, do not take a mainstream economics course. Find out about universities where you can get a more, critical pluralist economics education and go there to study. Wherever you are, however, try to combine economics with the study of society, history and politics – and think about the connections rather than keeping them separate. And, if your economics courses do not open up alternative ‘ways of seeing’ ask the professors why not¹⁵; maybe also form a students’ society to discuss what can be done to generate challenge and change. All of that will make the process of studying much more engaging and ultimately much more fruitful. Go for it...

Laurène Tran, PEPS-Economie, (France):

Try to take courses in the other social sciences, and of course get in touch as soon as possible with your local or national student group fighting for pluralism in economics teaching.¹⁶ If there is none, launch your own!

Question 8 Is there anything you would like to add, not addressed in the above questions?

Sudipta Bhattacharyya (India):

I started with the idea that ‘pluralism in economics’ is a movement rather than a doctrine per se. It emerged due to the suffocating atmosphere created by neo-classical economics. Therefore, all the pluralist economics scattered in many countries should be integrated in some common network.

Victoria Chick (UK):

Undoubtedly, but not now.

Małgorzata Dereniowska (Poland):

Along with the recognition that science as an objective search for (simple and determined!) truth in a social vacuum is an outdated endeavor, I would like to also raise the issue of social responsibility of the academia and academic communities. Not only the products of science, but the process of knowledge production matter; everything has social consequences. Whether we talk about reforming the economics curriculum, reorienting the research program of economics, or the practical import of scientific recommendations, the awareness of accountability of academicians necessarily brings attention to the issues of attitudes, skills and competences, as well as normative orientation. Implementing reasonable pluralism means tackling these issues, which calls also for an inter- and transdisciplinary exchange.

If I am to add anything, it is an invitation to continue this interdisciplinary dialogue to learn from each other, to bring together the best of what each of us has to offer.

Arturo Hermann (Italy):

As noted earlier, a central task of pluralistic methodology is to move beyond a positivistic conception of social sciences by considering the spheres of more qualitative and ‘unmeasurable’ aspects of socio-economic phenomena. Carrying out this analysis is anything but easy and smooth, as it brings to the fore the analysis of cultures and values. This happens because, as we know, in these enquiries it is very difficult to achieve ‘objective results’. Not only because these phenomena are difficult to measure, but more importantly, because we are embedded in the system and carry a precise set of values and orientations.

For instance, how should we appraise societies that consider it ‘fair and necessary’ to keep other persons, groups and classes in a condition of inferiority, based on rigid forms of authoritarian relations? This raises a major problem in social sciences: on the one hand, ‘cultural relativism’ tends to demand that every culture should receive, on the grounds of ensuring equal respect to each context considered, equal legitimacy no matter

how ethical we deem it. On the other hand, ethical considerations lead us to criticise the aspects of the cultures we believe more unacceptable, but this can be interpreted as an unwelcome interference into the business of another culture. Moreover, and by the same token, authoritarian societies can criticise ours for opposite reasons, by claiming, for instance, that too much equality engenders lack of respect for the social order.

Even in the presence of a shared culture that makes cultural divergences less irreducible, relevant conflicts are likely to arise that are difficult to settle. For instance, different opinions exist between and within progressives and conservatives on many relevant issues pertaining to the spheres of politics, political economy, social and family issues.

In this situation, how can we decide, say, how much to cut or increase public spending? Or how progressive a tax system should be? Or, how much subsidies should be granted to students and the unemployed? Or, how should we deal with 'non-conventional families', or with the use of alcohol or drugs? And, last but not least, what are the most suitable international policies, for instance regarding borders and immigration?

These issues are further complicated by the circumstance that, even if an agreement is reached about what is expedient to produce – for instance, an adequate supply of necessities – relevant opinions and interests will differ. For instance, how should we organise production, what reward should producers receive and how much should we pay for them?

It is evident that these issues are likely to trigger an enduring debate, where it is difficult to locate the 'best and more scientific solution'. On that matter, the simplification of positivistic solutions seems utterly inadequate to effectively address their complexity. In fact, it is likely that, mostly in an unconscious way, the system of values and cultures that has been relegated (or repressed) in the background creeps upon, and heavily conditions, the 'objective analysis of the measurable phenomena'. How can we sort out this problem without being trapped in the opposite problems – the nihilism of the excess of cultural relativism, or a kind of moral and/or scientific dogmatism?

For instance, how can we 'demonstrate' that a better participatory process would improve the quality of individual and collective life? In the analysis of these tangled issues, a scientific approach based on pluralism of theories and methodologies, and on the collaboration of many disciplines, seems particularly appropriate. A key element for progressing along this avenue is to improve the process of social valuing at every stage of decision-making process.

The theory of social value has a long tradition in the history of economic theory, and stresses that the system of social and individual values plays, more or less explicitly, a crucial role in policy action. Significant contributions were provided by J.R. Commons' notion of 'Reasonable Value', in particular in the second II volume of *Institutional Economics: Its Place in Political Economy*; and by John Dewey, in particular in *Social Valuation, Freedom and Culture*, and 'The Meaning of Truth'.

The following passage by Marc Tool effectively expresses this concept, "To conceive of a problem requires the perception of a difference between 'what is going on' and 'what ought to go on'. Social value theory is logically and inescapably required to distinguish what ought to be from what is; indeed, it is implicit in modern methodology", [in Hodgson et al., (1994), Vol. 1, p.406].

In the process of identifying for a particular issue the desired alternatives, psychological sciences can play a paramount role in casting a better light on the orientations of the persons involved and the policies most adequate for their attainment.

For instance, if we assume, following many contributions of psychology and psychoanalysis, that establishing sound interpersonal relations lies at the heart of the true expression of the needs of the person, the ethical principles of solidarity, democracy and participation would be endowed with a more precise content since they are based on a continual scientific-based observation of the characteristics of human life. Of course, even in this case, there will continue to be discordant theories and opinions. In fact, all the matters pertaining to the sphere of feelings and values cannot undergo the more objective tests of validation typical of natural sciences, since there tends to be a strong personal and emotional involvement with the issues at hand.

This, however, does not mean that social and psychological sciences are less scientific than natural sciences, only that they require a different test of validation, a test which, by its very nature, tends always to be tentative and open to further verification. In this respect, we can ‘demonstrate’ that promoting participation of citizens in social issues can improve their self-realisation, but this demands a careful study of the situation, and of the persons involved; and the comparison of different opinions regarding the promotion of these goals.

In conclusion, in order to properly address the complex problems of social life, I believe particularly appropriate, a pluralistic methodology able to establish a permanent scientific dialogue.

Maria Madi (Brazil):

I would like to highlight that the WEA Pedagogy Blog is one example of action to change the state of affairs in economics curriculum: we are trying to build consensus that change is needed and to find an agenda for change. This blog is an informal space where pedagogical experiences from a real-world perspective can be spread in order to promote a collaborative platform. New perspectives regarding knowledge, abilities and attitudes are always present in a significant learning process where the target is the students’ intellectual autonomy characterised by the development of a solid reflection-base to think, and a critical attitude towards the political, economic and social reality where they live.

Hoang Nguyen (Vietnam):

It would be great to mention the International Student Initiative for Pluralism in Economics and its Open Letter (available at <http://www.isipe.net/open-letter/>) in your discussion.

Peter Soderbaum (Sweden):

I think that it is very relevant to ask and perhaps easier to respond to what I, as a retired professor, can do in the present situation. There are many journals, and we can discuss and scrutinise what is happening in different countries and internationally. In my recent article (Söderbaum, 2013), I criticised UN organisations such as UNEP and UNDC for their reliance and defence of neoclassical theory. Rather than respecting different scientific and ideological perspectives, actors within these organisations preach ‘mainstreaming’ approaches in relation to biological diversity and in other areas.

Frank Stilwell (Australia):

In my view, political economy should really be regarded as the mainstream. All the big thinkers in the history of economic thought (e.g., Smith, Mill, Marx, Veblen, Keynes, Galbraith, even Friedman) have been political economists, concerned with studying how economic arrangements relate to social and political concerns. This ‘big thinking’ approach requires a pluralist perspective and an interest in engaging with ethical concerns. By contrast, the failed attempt by neoclassical economics to provide a technical, ‘scientific’ approach has produced a ‘cul-de-sac’, albeit one with an enormous volume of traffic...going nowhere useful for the future of humankind. It is time to get back on the highway.

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Editor's note: first thoughts on the dialogue

I enjoyed putting this roundtable together, and I hope the reader finds value. It is not my intention to produce a composite, or agreeable summation, for even if I could, it would not do justice to the assembled wisdom in the preceding pages. The responses are rich and fertile enough to provide a foundation for future debate. Nevertheless, I would like to launch this roundtable with a few thoughts. First, I was struck by the passion and

enthusiasm for pluralism. Second, most respondents endorse an interdisciplinary and plura-disciplinary approach, which I fully support. Third, many respondents advocated that the students themselves take an initiative for their own education; while I do not disagree, and while all of us have been forced to do this, I also feel that students need our passion and our direction as to what economics is, and who among the spurned and forgotten should be read. And finally, yes, pluralism is about introducing students to alternative views, to different ways of thinking, but it is also a process, a state of mind, a *modus operandi*. So in addition to exposing students to a wide and exciting variety of economic thinking, we also have to teach how to be pluralist, and how to be humble, good listeners, and willing to dialogue and work with others, a task which should be done at the very beginning of education.

Notes

- 1 Editor's note: For evidence of this in India, see Bhattacharyya (2013).
- 2 Editor's note: See Fine and Milonakis (2009) for an elaboration.
- 3 Editor's note. See Lee (2010) especially pp. 153 – 186.
- 4 Editor's note: The web pages for these organisations are: <http://www.rethinkeconomics.org>; and <http://www.isipe.net/>.
- 5 Editor's note: The two papers were published in the *IJPEE*, Vol. 6, no, 1.
- 6 Editor's note: For a detailed discussion of situation at the University of Sydney, and for Australian universities in particular, please see Thornton (2014); and Argyrous and Thornton (2014).
- 7 Editor's note: See Note 5.
- 8 Editor's note: I fully agree. My purpose was to give readers a quick flavour of the available books. We will be launching an ongoing series reviewing pluralist textbooks. I invite readers to let us know of existing books, and if you would like to review.
- 9 Editor's note: Also recommended is van Staveren (2015).
- 10 Editor's note: Probably no one has done this better than Lee (2010).
- 11 For an excellent guide see Hill and Myatt (2010)
- 12 Editor's note: The RT website is <http://www.rethinkeconomics.org/>.
- 13 Editor's note: See Mallin (2009) for helpful suggestions.
- 14 Editor's note: This quote is from a paean to Marshall (1890 [1946], p.43), Keynes' teacher at Cambridge. It is interesting that Marshall himself wrote, "The economist needs the three great intellectual faculties, perception, imagination, and reason: and most of all he [sic] needs imagination, to put him on the track of those causes of visible events which are remote or lie below the surface, and of those effects of visible causes which are remote or lie below the surface".
- 15 Editor's note: See Hill and Myatt (2010).
- 16 Interested students should contact our student participants in this dialogue for very helpful and enthusiastic advice: Kamilla, Laurène and Hoang.