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### Book Review

Book review: Garnett, Robert F., Erik K. Olson and Martha Starr (eds) (2010): *Economic Pluralism*, London and New York (Frontiers of Political Economy series No. 122, 302 pages, hardcover, Routledge, ISBN 978-0-203-87181-2)

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## Book review

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The International Confederation of Associations for Pluralism in Economics, ICAPE for short, organized its second conference in 2007. The proceedings of the conference, which was held in Salt Lake City, Utah, were published in 2010. Robert Garnett, Erik Olsen and Martha Starr selected 20 papers which reflect on the diversity and maturity of heterodox economics. The three editors compiled a great selection of relevant research from numerous leading economists on pluralism in economics. The volume is a wonderful and inspiring overview on the progressive debate for a more pluralistic science of economics which remains highly relevant today, even though the conference occurred before the outbreak of the global financial crisis.

The articles are grouped into three sections. The first eight essays reflect on theoretical questions and especially on the ontology of pluralism. The next seven papers debate alternative ways to organize economic activities besides the market system. The last five contributions present practical solutions in economic education from BA to PhD level.

The book starts with an article by Garnett et al. The authors give an overview of the following chapters and put the arguments in the context of the heterodox debate on pluralism and historical events. The second article by Frederic Lee takes stock of the different plural schools, societies and the interaction between each other and the mainstream in economics. After this, David Colander evaluates the anti-mainstream strategy of heterodox economists and argues for heterodoxy inside the mainstream. More mathematics and econometric work would have made the heterodox research understandable for open-minded economists inside the mainstream. The fourth article, by William Waller, argues for more interaction between heterodox approaches, and he sees convergence between different schools like post-Keynesians and Institutionalists. Next, Strassmann et al. look at discrimination inside the heterodoxy. Gender, race and ethnicity are dividing lines for more pluralism. They give empirical evidence and mention two positive examples like the policies of the International Association for Feminist Economics (IAFFE) and the pluralistic interaction inside the Human Development and Capability Association (HDCA). Marqués and Weisman show the anti-pluralism of Kuhnean incommensurability between paradigms. By using the example of Sheila Dow (2004) and her approach, they see in John Stuart Mill a better foundation to accept different voices and points of view. The argument for pluralism is moved forward by the next article. Rogier De Langhe shows the strength and weakness of pluralism and uses the positive example of the natural sciences. Individual approaches should be focused, but disciplines should be pluralistic. The foundation

of pluralism in economics is given by the final chapter in part I. Tony Lawson, the leading thinker of Critical Realism in economics, gives an ontological foundation and then Vinca Bigo gives a critical comment on the pluralism of open systems in the Critical Realist tradition. Lawson's pluralism is a great step forward, but could be a new metatheoretical monist frame.

Part II of the book deals with different forms of economic systems. Gar Alperovitz argues for a more democratic organized capitalism in the United States and Robert Hahnel gives an overview on his idea of participatory economics. Heterodox economists could help activists to build a different economic reality. Greenwood and Holt present the weaknesses of GDP measures and argue for a pluralist definition of economic development which includes natural sustainability, quality of life or the Genuine Progress Index (GPI). The Austrian economist Emily Chamlee-Wright comments on the three former papers and emphasizes the role of individual liberty and different opinions. There is a need for experiments for civil society beyond the state and the market. Virgil Henry Storr adds to this argument by comparing the libertarian Hayek with the Marxist Lefebvre. He sees extra-catalytic relationships as a necessary element for exchange. The next article, by Iona Negru, extends this analysis and she sees in market exchange the coexistence of gift and commodity exchange at the same time. The economy is a plurality of institutions. Philip Kozel grounds the theoretical argument by Iona Negru. He shows effectiveness of local exchange networks like HOURS in Ithaca and supports the Aristotelian argument that communal solidarity and local market activity interact positively.

The last part of the book moves into economics education. The final four papers give practical examples from higher education that pluralism is possible and necessary. KimMarie McGodrich gives a general overview on undergraduate education and the positive effect of conversation between different approaches and the application of economic theory on real local problems. Alison Butler argues for non-objective teaching of economics. Highlighting the different normative elements of schools of thought and giving voice to the different perceptions of students' education is more successful. Gilles Raveaud from the French post-autistic movement shows the limits of pluralist teaching. Heterodox economists often fear the freedom from political bias or intellectual ambiguity. Rod O'Donnell shows the positive effect of pluralist teaching on skill formation like creativity or communication. He uses his experience with 300 seminars where eight different schools of thought are debated and two class games are used. The last article by Yanis Varoufakis gives an example from a Greek PhD program. He analyses the socio-economic and political factors needed to establish an economic doctoral program which puts a strong emphasis on philosophy. A positive evaluation of the structure and outcome is added.

I liked the collection of articles a lot. The 20 articles speak very well towards each other and add up. They cover a great area of new debate in pluralist economic science. Besides the great overview and reworking of the articles, the editors did an outstanding job by confronting the different arguments directly. For example, Chamlee-Wright, an Austrian economist, discusses the radical proposal for market socialism by Alperovitz and Hahnel, while Marqués and Weisman (pp. 74–86) show the weaknesses of the Kuhnean approach.

Reading the book, I got the impression that the critique against mainstream economics regarding its overly strong emphasis on theory is also valid for non-mainstream economists. Although numerous empirical connections, data and cases are discussed, more empirical grounding would have been helpful to make the research more convincing. This is especially the case in part III on economic education, which

would have gained from the inclusion of quantitative data. Three major debates were covered, but in any follow-up to this book two other areas could be added: the role of mathematics and the ideological character of economic paradigms.

Furthermore, I looked in vain for some references in line with alternatives to capitalism like Ota Šik (1985) or Ethan Miller (2006) in part II. The book could have been improved by being more critical towards heterodox economics and by showing that the mainstream has broadened its views, as is the case with New Institutional Economics or New Economic Sociology. David Colander emphasizes both points in his article (pp. 36–47), although other similar publications have done less ambitious work.

To conclude, the debate of strategies in heterodox economics has moved forward a great deal. The critique of the orthodoxy has been further elaborated by this book, political alternatives have been developed and practical steps for a better and more pluralistic education have been successfully outlined.

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