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Pluralism and Heterodoxy: Introduction to the Special Issue

Andrew Mearman

Abstract: This paper introduces a special issue of the journal devoted to work presented at two recent conferences of the Association for Heterodox Economics (AHE). The AHE is an organisation which advocates and provides a forum for non-mainstream approaches to economics. Recent conferences have focused on pluralism. Pluralism is a variegated concept with multiple motivations and arguments in its favour. Such arguments tend to be ontological and epistemological, but may also be pedagogical. Pluralism has been advocated as a moniker preferable to heterodoxy which might be adopted by non-mainstream economists. However, it is problematic. The papers which comprise the remainder of this issue illustrate that point. The papers are discussed in turn and contrasted.

Keywords: pluralism, Association for Heterodox Economics, ontology, epistemology, pedagogy

Introduction

I should first like to thank the editors of the Journal of Philosophical Economics for this opportunity to present work emanating from the recent conferences of the Association for Heterodox Economics (AHE). It is a welcome opportunity, as is the journal itself.

This issue of the journal serves three purposes. One: it showcases the AHE and provides an opportunity to publicise its objectives and work. Two: it presents work on the key issue of pluralism in economics and offers papers which discuss, criticise and exemplify pluralist work in economics. Three: it presents work in economics explicitly from a philosophical approach. Such work is increasingly

important at a time when the future direction of economics seems uncertain and contestable.

I am writing this introduction as guest editor of this issue of the journal, as a past organiser of an AHE conference (at the University of the West of England, Bristol, UK), and as a past Co-ordinator of the AHE. I write also as an economist concerned with the subject's philosophy (see Mearman, "Dualism") and with pluralist methodology (see Downward and Mearman, "Retroduction", "Decision-Making").

This introduction is split into three parts. First, the AHE is discussed. The AHE is now almost ten years old, and has undergone considerable changes in its form, presentation and orientation. It has grappled with the question, meaning and role of pluralism in economics. Second, the issues surrounding pluralism are discussed briefly. Pluralism has, appropriately, a variety of meanings and motivations behind it. Many of those are discussed further in the papers presented in this issue. Third, the papers are summarised.

The AHE and 'heterodoxy'

A commentary on the development of the AHE can be found in Lee ("Emergence"). Lee's perspective is singularly significant since he drove the foundation of the AHE. Lee shows that the use of the term 'heterodox' became increasingly popular from the 1970s onwards, reaching widespread usage in non-mainstream circles in the 1990s. Early in the process, the word described institutionalist thought; but fairly quickly, the word took on an encompassing meaning, to include perspectives such as: institutionalism, Marxism, Austrianism, Post Keynesianism, Sraffian economics, Georgism, and social economics. The term 'heterodox' was, according to Lee, seen as advantageous because it did not use the negative prefix 'non-', as in 'non-mainstream', 'non-neoclassical' or 'non-orthodox'. It was also seen as inclusive, more so than alternatives such as 'political economy', which, according to Lee, was associated too closely with Marxism to be amenable to economists of other stripes.

It is beyond the scope of this paper, or indeed this issue, to define heterodox economics. At present, as discussed in Lawson ("Heterodox") and Mearman ("Teaching"), heterodox economics has multiple meanings. Heterodoxy is defined at different levels of analysis. For some, a heterodox approach can be found at a

methodological level, for example via the rejection of mathematical formalism as the exclusive method of choice (Lawson, "Heterodox"), or ontologically via a focus on open systems (Lawson, "Heterodox"; Dow, this volume, et passim). For others, heterodox is indeed defined in terms of an objection to the mainstream. For other groups, heterodox is an umbrella term encompassing the schools of thought outlined above. Heterodox may even be applied to pedagogy: a mainstream methodology might be considered one which engages in the teaching of mainstream concepts exclusively. Indeed, much of the focus of recent heterodox work has been pedagogical, both in developing teaching techniques and curricula. In the former, the 'heterodox' work mirrors developments in the mainstream, but in the latter, it represents a departure.

Now, though, for many, the term 'heterodox' has become problematic, for several reasons. Crucially, it is still regarded as oppositional. Lawson's arguments about heterodoxy start from the position that heterodox schools are partly defined by their opposition to the mainstream, at some level. However, Lawson and other work stress the openness of heterodox approaches. Indeed, the papers presented here by Szostak, Bigo and Negru, and by Denis, explicitly try to incorporate different strands of thought. Mearman ("Teaching") shows three different models of delivering a heterodox teaching module: one is where a single heterodox perspective, such as one on Post Keynesianism; the second is where heterodoxy is taught as a series of critiques of the mainstream; the third is where a single, unified, heterodox approach is taught. Clearly, these teaching models are reflections of the possibilities for heterodox thought more generally. The purpose of presenting heterodoxy in that way was to show that as well as critique of the mainstream, it represents positive, constructive research programmes (or a single programme).

The problem for 'heterodoxy' as being oppositional is that it seems exclusive. Some mainstream economists, for instance those in pedagogy, express sympathy for some of the arguments made by heterodox economists; but express concern that the term 'heterodox' prevents dialogue with the mainstream. In addition, the argument is made that heterodoxy is unnecessarily fixed, and that it ignores the developments in economic theory and methodology. For instance, the point is made (for example, by Colander) that what used to be heterodox often becomes orthodox. Also, the obverse is true: Keynesian ideas went from heterodox, to orthodox, and back. Thus, the term heterodox lacks the flexibility it needs to be useful.

It would be possible to discuss in much greater depth the nature of heterodoxy, but it is apposite to focus on one specific issue: the relationship between heterodoxy and pluralism. Indeed, this is the issue considered in the papers in this issue. If heterodoxy is defined as 'non-' or 'anti-' mainstream, then its pluralism is automatically limited. Similarly, if heterodoxy is defined in terms of isolated schools of thought, such as Marxism or Post Keynesianism, all of which are asserting the superiority of their approach, again this may limit pluralism, which can be defined as the advocacy of a plurality of approaches. Of course, none of the above is necessarily true: heterodoxy can be open-minded and engage in dialogue, including with the mainstream, in the same way that an Austrian or institutionalist can debate with, and borrow from each other. However, the tension between heterodoxy and pluralism remains, and periodically calls are made to drop the term 'heterodoxy' and replace it with 'pluralism'. The counterargument is that pluralism may be a vacuous concept, with which everyone would agree; or is one which facilitates relativism; or which ignores the apparent facts of the current reality in academic economics: that there are in place mechanisms which promote certain perspectives and methods, often at the expense of others.

In many ways, the AHE embodies the issues raised above. Lee ("Emergence") states that the formation of the AHE took place on paper in October 1998. The first AHE event was a fringe conference adjunct to the Royal Economic Society (RES) in 1999. Since then, no attempt has been made to adjunct to the RES conference, but an annual conference has taken place, always either in the UK or the Republic of Ireland. The geographical focus has remained because the AHE is seen as primarily an organisation which serves the needs of British Isles-based heterodox economists; this is partly because those economists face specific and unusually strong and formal mechanisms which inhibit their activity. Chief among these are the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), a process of evaluation of economics research. Although the RAE states clearly that pieces of work will be evaluated individually, it is suspected that the pervasive ranking system will come into play: this may not be because of a deliberate attempt to subvert the process, merely a reflection of the prevailing standards for economic research and the implicit ranking systems economists impose on work they read. The second mechanism which may have a negative impact on heterodox economics is the Quality Assurance Audit (QAA) and its associated 'benchmarking statements', which lay out standards of what is considered good economics and the requirements for what ought to be taught. Freeman provides an analysis of this, as do Clarke and Mearman ("Marxist"). In many ways, the benchmarking statement

is fairly benign, but Freeman's comparison of economics with other subjects shows the economics statement to be comparatively monist.

Initially, as Lee reports, the AHE appealed to a fairly narrow set of non-mainstream economists, mainly Marxists and Post Keynesians. Subsequently, though, the AHE has embraced a broader set of perspectives, for example now having regular contact with Austrians, and a significant presence of green and ecological economists. Further, explicit approaches have been made to evolutionary, behavioural and feminist economists to increase their representation within the AHE, particularly at the annual conference. However, concurrent with this broadening of approaches represented, has been a growing concern to promote pluralism. This has taken two forms: first to promote pluralism within economics more generally. This has been largely a response to the UK-specific and global forces claimed to be acting against heterodox economists. Second, though, it flows from the recognition that heterodox schools could be exclusive just as the mainstream may be. Thus, since 2003, explicit calls have been made for paper submissions which address and encourage pluralism in economics. Also, though, a recognition has grown that heterodox economists must be pluralistic and relevant. Hence, the 2007 conference focused on 'pluralism in action'. This thrust continues into 2008, where a stress is to be placed on papers which discuss pedagogical and environmental issues, in addition to the traditional concerns of heterodox economists.

The papers in this issue focus on pluralism. They come from conferences of the AHE in 2005 (at City University, London) and at the London School of Economics in 2006. The themes of those conferences were respectively 'pluralism in economics' and 'pluralism, economics and the social sciences'. The latter explicitly invited contributions from outside economics. The submissions which resulted addressed a wide range of topics and came from a number of perspectives. However, because the conference themes focused on pluralism, the papers selected for publication here all address that theme explicitly. Many excellent papers could be not be considered for this issue, because they did not address the conference theme. Thus, no claim is made that these are the 'best' papers presented at those conferences. The papers presented here all help define, debate, clarify, broaden and/or exemplify pluralism in economics. For this reason, a brief discussion of pluralism would be advantageous.

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Pluralism

The papers in this volume present many of the definitions of pluralism, as well as arguments for it, but at this stage, it is useful to set the scene with a brief discussion of pluralism.

There have been several and continual calls for pluralism in economics over the last twenty years or so. Caldwell can be regarded as a starting point for many further calls and investigations, the most notable of which are Salanti and Screpanti, Dow ("Structured") and the petitions by groups of students in Paris, Cambridge and Kansas City at the turn of the new century. This begs two questions: what is pluralism; and why is it advocated?

The first thing to state is that pluralism, perhaps appropriately, does not have a single definition. Surveys of the meanings abound; perhaps the best is in Screpanti and Salanti, in which treatments by Mäki, and by Dow ("Pluralism") are most informative. Mäki identifies plurality, i.e., the existence of many entities of one category; he identifies a range of different pluralities, for example, ontological, veristic, theoretical, epistemological, methodological, meta-methodological, ethical and ideological. He then distinguishes plurality from pluralism, i.e. the advocacy of plurality based on some set of reasons. Further, the entities identified in a plurality can be complements, i.e. parts of the same truth, or substitutes, i.e., competing elements of the truth. Moreover, pluralism can be relative (to a set of conditions) or absolute; and it can be temporary (limited to a set of time periods) or permanent. Most economics courses are temporarily pluralistic: they cursorily address alternatives before moving on to concentrate on the favoured explanation. The distinction between plurality and pluralism is adopted very clearly in this issue, particularly by Dow and by Bigo and Negru.

As a further complication, there are of course various levels of knowledge: any subject area can, following Dow ("Structured"), be thought of as a structured, layered entity. Thus, economics has layers which include policy advice, theory, understanding of an event or situation, method, methodology, epistemology, ontology, meta-narrative, ideological narrative, ethical position, type of logic, etc. There are many examples at each of these levels. The most commonly considered level is that of theory: most of the controversy in economics has concerned a plurality (or lack) of theoretical approaches; however, there have of course been other debates, for example about the best choice of method. Of course, for some,

this range of definitions is a strength: it reflects the reasons, ontological and epistemological, why pluralism itself is advantageous. However, for others, it is a problem, signifying confusion, postmodernist indeterminism and eclecticism. Dow (this issue) discusses all of these different levels. Her paper provides a framework for understanding the uses of the term pluralism used elsewhere in the issue.

For the record, the papers in this issue utilise a broad range of definitions – or alternatively, identifying marks – of pluralism or a pluralistic approach to economics. First, following Mäki above, it should be noted, as Dow, and Bigo and Negru do, that plurality is not the same as pluralism. Plurality describes a state of affairs, whereas pluralism describes an approach. In terms of states of affairs, the authors here offer the following as characteristics of a pluralistic outcome: economics in which more than merely neo-classical economics exists (Dow); multiple heterodox approaches exist (Dow); a plurality of approaches at ontological, methodological, method, theoretical and ethical levels (Dow); scope for different meanings (Dow); dialogue between schools (Denis); convergence of approaches (Denis); the use of integrative analysis (Szostak; Bigo and Negru); economic analysis spans political views (e.g. combining Austrian economics with other heterodox perspectives (Holcombe); structured pluralism (Dow); the absence of rejection of different viewpoints (Bigo and Negru); no single set of theory appraisal criteria exist (Holcombe, citing Caldwell); disagreements (Bigo and Negru); eclecticism (Holcombe); relativism (Bigo and Negru); and the acceptance as valid of many different approaches (Holcombe). This list is not exhaustive.

In turn, if the list just provided audits pluralist outcomes, the authors also discusses pluralistic behaviour, such as: avoiding the belief that one's position is superior (Szostak, Holcombe); regarding different schools of thought/approaches as being complements not substitutes (Szostak); an adoption of approaches such as integrative analysis (Szostak); even-handedness (Dow); the encouragement of variety (Dow); finding common ground (Denis); openness to new ideas (Bigo and Negru); tolerance of other viewpoints (Bigo and Negru); the conscious avoidance of meta-principles (Bigo and Negru); a plurality of organising principles (Bigo and Negru); acceptance of otherness (Bigo and Negru); avoidance of antagonism to other approaches (Holcombe); and finally, perhaps most controversially, pluralism as the failure to identify oneself as belonging to a particular group (Holcombe). Again, this list is not exhaustive and further may not capture all the authors' implicit or explicit positions.

What should be clear from the preceding discussion is that pluralism remains an elusive concept. Many conversations (either in person or in print) suffer from terminological confusion: most commonly, authors are talking at different levels. Thus, it is perfectly reasonable to accept that authors who claim that orthodoxy is pluralistic (in the sense of variants of method used) are correct, whilst agreeing with those who claim that essentially the meta-methodology of the orthodoxy is monistic (i.e. singular and exclusionary). At times, then, discussions of pluralism can travel in circles. It would be bold indeed to claim that the papers in this issue avoid such pitfalls: indeed, they do not. In fact, that they do not is one of the intriguing aspects of this issue (however frustrating it may be for foes of ambiguity and vagueness). What is encouraging, though, is that common themes emerge within the papers: for example, that plurality and pluralism must be distinguished, that pluralism operates in multi-faceted and multi-layered ways; and crucially, that pluralism has multiple benefits.

There are several arguments for adopting pluralism. Some are ontological, some epistemological. There are also pedagogical reasons for moving away from a monist approach. Ontological arguments (taken up by Dow and Holcombe in this issue) focus on the openness, fragmentation and complexity of reality, as is currently understood. Science has traditionally rested on the assumption of cosmological unity or at least structure, such that there is "one world" (Mäki) which might be discovered by scientific enquiry. This assumption does not rule out theoretical pluralism, as will become obvious below. Several recent contributions have questioned the unity of nature, such that a plurality of entities might be said to exist. This plurality might be in the sense – well established and debated – that reality may comprise multiple substances, such as mind and matter. Also, though, recent developments in theoretical physics have considered the possibilities of multiple realities. Relatedly, postmodernist philosophers have argued that each individual's experience and therefore account of reality is as valid as any other and thus that there is no single reality, merely collections of alternative realities. This greater acceptance of heterogeneity of individuals has permeated into economics, through, for example, Sen's capabilities approach, which attempts to capture the diversity of individuals and their goals, etc. (see, for example, Benicourt).

Related to complexity is the notion of openness. This notion has been developed recently by a number of different authors in different ways. It is beyond the scope of this paper to survey those approaches. However, to summarise, openness can

result in several, complementary ways. For example, open systems are those in which event regularities of the sort 'if x then y' are unlikely to result (Lawson, "Reality"). Open systems involve the (often intermittent and unpredictable) interaction of multiple mechanisms. Open systems have permeable, fuzzy and shifting boundaries (Dow, "Macroeconomic"). Open systems allow flows of inputs and outputs, which may change the internal composition of the system. Open systems are usually also complex. Open systems have several implications in this context. Because they are so complex and have interacting mechanisms (for example), in open systems abstractions and impositions of 'closures' on the open system are inevitable (see Dow, "Macroeconomic"; Mearman, "Open"). However, such abstract closures are necessarily partial; thus, any theoretical system can have only partial application in an open system, so any model is incomplete (Dow, "Pluralism"). No single model or abstraction to a single mechanism, or even set of mechanisms, can realistically hope to capture all the factors necessary to reach a complete explanation of a phenomenon(a). Therefore, multiple theoretical accounts are required. Also, the nature of reality is such that some objects are not prone to quantification, so multiple types of data and methodologies are required.

Although Samuels argues that there is no licence for moving from an ontological position to a specific substantive position – and indeed this is one of his arguments for methodological pluralism – the next stage of the argument is to examine epistemological reasons for pluralism, many of which are based on ontological conditions. As Dow ("Pluralism") shows, the nature of the reality is contrary to the axioms of classical logic, given that the latter is based on systems comprising atomistic entities closed off from outside influences. Therefore, an alternative form of logic is required, one which is 'human' and draws on such things as common sense. The implication for pluralism is that no one logic is appropriate; no single theory or method can be relied upon; that a range of methods must be used; and that judgement is essential for decision-making under uncertainty. Related to this is the claim that each subject must choose its own methodology (see Dusek, this volume).

Epistemologically, single theories may also be impossible to arrive at. For instance, the Popperian system of crucial tests and falsification is flawed, because confirmation and rejection are limited: every test is subject to the constraint that there may be some decision rule, hypothesis or data set by which a theory might be confirmed or rejected; in general rigorous testing cannot be done; so testing is not a universal criterion for theory selection (Samuels). Further, the theory-ladenness

of facts means that empirical tests cannot be conclusive (Samuels). Thus, following Kuhn, better theories are not always selected, i.e., the process of selection is imperfect (Budzinski). Moreover, following Popper, the selection process to find the best, ultimate theory is incomplete (Budzinski). Theories are also fallible – as they are indeed generally – to previously undiscovered evidence (Budzinski). Consequently, from Lakatos, dominant theories might not be superior (Budzinski). As a result, lock in to a specific theory might constitute scientific regress and might be inefficient, because 'better' theories are ruled out a *priori* (Budzinski).

The third strand of justifications for a pluralist approach might be pedagogical. The first element to this argument is to discuss the benefits of pluralism in terms of educational philosophy. Clarke and Mearman ("Marxist", "Winch") discuss the established contrast between 'liberal' and 'instrumentalist' education. The dichotomy rests on a further distinction between education which is 'intrinsically' beneficial and that which is 'instrumentally' beneficial. Instrumental benefits are those concrete, identifiable skills, such as the ability to solve certain types of problem, know formulae or techniques, remember and perhaps apply theory; in general, instrumental benefits involve the achievement of specific narrow learning outcomes. An education which is geared to such instrumental goals, clearly (if not knowingly) at the expense of other goals, may be regarded as 'instrumental*ist*'. An example of instrumentalist education is one in which a student is indoctrinated into a particular view. It has been argued, by those such as Hobsbawm, that education is inherently indoctrinatory, and indeed that state education was begun with the aim of indoctrination in mind. More broadly, though, any educational process can be regarded as indoctrinatory if whatever content is delivered is done so uncritically.

Such uncritical delivery would be considered contrary to the tenets of 'liberal' education, which argues that education is intrinsically beneficial, for its ability to foster analytical, critical and comparative thinking, leading to the development of an open-mindedness and flexibility of thought. On this liberal approach, a parallel perspectives approach is licensed. Note that such an approach is not inevitable: it should be possible to teach one perspective – whatever that is – and still achieve the liberal aims. However, as Clarke and Mearman ("Heterodoxy", "Marxist") have argued, this tends not to happen in economics in any systematic sense. Indeed, in the UK, for example, mechanisms operate which militate against such liberal goals being met. For example, as discussed above, the Research

Assessment Exercise is an institutional structure which creates incentives to hire one type of economist (Lee and Harley). Moreover, other institutional pressures – including the training of most economists in mainstream theory and methods – mean that syllabuses tend to concentrate on the delivery of mainstream material and difficult critical questions are postponed indefinitely (see Sutton). Thus, although an approach of teaching multiple or 'parallel' perspectives is not inevitable, they become desirable, because they increase the likelihood that the critical and comparative faculties of the student will be augmented.

This issue also provides a range of arguments for pluralism, many of which have already been discussed: all methods, models and theories are unavoidably incomplete and all offer different insights into a complex, open world (Szostak, Dusek, Bigo and Negru, Dow, Holcombe); that in turn is likely to preclude holistic and coherent explanation, whereas research from a single perspective is necessarily biased and incomplete (Szostak); the authors seem to agree that in general, one approach is inadequate: e.g. the dominance of mathematical argument cannot be explained by mathematical argument alone (Dow) and often, mathematical argument is inferior to verbal argument (Dusek); monism stifles discussion (Dow) (and therefore, perhaps, development of knowledge); there are ethical grounds for pluralism (Dow); no mechanism exists for unifying knowledge about reality, so we have no choice but to accept plurality of approach (Dow); variety is essential to the survival of the discipline in the face of an evolving subject matter (Dow); general epistemological and methodological positions are flawed – always need to look inside the specific science in question (Dusek); and the claim that prediction cannot be the only standard for scientificity (Dusek).

This special issue

The papers presented in this special issue were all initially presented at the AHE conferences of 2005 and 2006. Both conferences concerned explicitly pluralism in economics.

Dusek presents arguments against the monist misconceptions which, he argues, dominate modern economics. These misconceptions include: the falsifiability and testing of theories, usually by econometric techniques; the irrelevance or at least reduced relevance of the realism of assumptions; the (false) dichotomy between mathematical and literary concepts in economics (and the supposed superiority of

the former) in which Dusek reflects the concerns of McCloskey's influential work; the emphasis on (a particular type of) prediction in theory evaluation; the exclusion of teleology; and the requirement to provide a 'better' theory in order to refute an existing one. Dusek pays particular attention to the problem of axiomatisation with false axioms; i.e. he argues against the position that axioms *per se* are problematic. This is significant in heterodoxy because the question of axioms has been debated. Dow, for example, has questioned the possibility of axioms in an uncertain world.

Dusek illustrates the impact of these monist misconceptions by examining briefly the theories of Purchasing Power Parity and Optimal Currency Areas. Many of the arguments presented by Dusek are already familiar to students of methodology; but one of the purposes of his discussion is to connect the claimed misconceptions to a monist approach; and more significantly, to highlight that they are features of an existing monism. Dusek is thus arguing for pluralism. Dusek also identifies how monist misconceptions are used to argue against pluralism, and how, he believes, these arguments are false.

Holcombe's deliberately provocative paper provides a challenge to the arguments put forward by Dusek and to some extent by Dow. Holcombe directly challenges the implicit presumption which might be inferred from heterodox economists, and its bodies such as the AHE, that heterodoxy is pluralist and orthodoxy is monist. Holcombe's paper recognises that there is more than one way to be pluralist. An apparently pluralist scholar may strongly assert the superiority of their approach. An apparently monist scholar may draw on many influences, even if they place it within a rigid analytical framework. Holcombe uses these notions to argue that a) heterodox economists are not as pluralistic as they like to think; that b) orthodox economists are in many ways no better, but at least have some rationale for their attitude; and c) orthodox economics is indeed pluralistic, in that it draws upon multiple methodological approaches.

Holcombe's paper is deliberately controversial. It echoes arguments from Davis and Sent in its thrust but presents different evidence. It may provoke strong objections from many heterodox economists. Dow's paper above argues explicitly against Holcombe's claims that heterodox economists are not pluralistic. Dow also stresses the distinction between plurality and pluralism, where the former is a state of affairs, whereas the latter is a normative position. Holcombe's identification of a plurality of methodologies may not constitute pluralism *per se*;

indeed, the arguments of Lawson and others, noted by Holcombe, suggest that the plurality of methods and methodologies within orthodoxy perhaps reflects confusion rather than openness, and that it is in any case highly circumscribed, constrained to a strain of formalism. One might also cite the behaviour of orthodox economists towards heterodoxy as evidence against their being plural*ist*. Examples are legion. An attempt by the AHE to obtain funding for training in 'heterodox methodology' was greeted by the response that "No doubt economists could and should refine and improve what they do and how they do it, but heterodox economics has been around for centuries in various guises and it has supplied, I would submit, next to nothing to our corpus of knowledge or techniques as these terms are understood by at least 99% of the profession" (ESRC referee's report). The journals which are highest ranked are generally populated by graduates of mainstream departments (see Lee, "Ranking" for a survey). That evidence may seem sufficient to illustrate the case that orthodox economists exclude heterodoxy. However, one of Holcombe's interesting responses to this issue is to note that indeed, orthodox economists exclude other orthodox economists: that the ranking of what is considered 'good economics' also victimises many of them.

Readers may object strongly to many of Holcombe's arguments. For example, it could be argued that Holcombe needed to address from where heterodoxy has come. If heterodoxy is a single entity, it must have arisen from dialogue between people from different schools, or at least people working across schools. This seems to contrast with Holcombe's view of heterodox economists viewing their schools as superior. Holcombe's argument does not explicitly consider heterodox journals, such as the *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, which publishes from a range of perspectives. It might also be argued that his argument highlights a problem of the definition of pluralism: that orthodox economics may be pluralistic at one level (e.g. method) but not at others (e.g. methodologically, with regard to mathematics). Nonetheless, his arguments are certainly worth making, not least because they force heterodox economists to think about their pluralism. If their pluralism is merely, as Davis and Sent puts it, 'strategic', then how genuine is it? Is pluralism merely a front for an attempt to replace one orthodoxy with another? Further, Holcombe's paper is worthwhile because it helps heterodox economists avoid the mistake of demonising the orthodoxy, misdefining and misunderstanding it, and thereby of marginalising themselves. Holcombe would, for instance, object to some of Szostak's characterisations of neoclassical economics. Why does this matter? The objection many orthodox economists make

is that the term 'heterodox' is too oppositional; and hence unconstructive. Sceptics may feel that this is merely an excuse: that orthodox economists could if they wished give heterodox ideas space, but they have not done so. However, let us take seriously the recognition offered by some orthodox economists that their work is failing to be as illuminative as might be hoped, and the desire that there be genuine change in the subject. That change may involve an embrace of pluralism.

Dow's paper attempts to rebut much of Holcombe's argument. She argues that pluralism and plurality should be distinguished, and that there are in any case many levels of plurality/pluralism, viz., theoretical, methodological, ontological, etc. She disagrees with Holcombe's provocative assessment of orthodoxy, and she sympathises with Dusek's interpretation. A key distinction made by Dow is between plurality and pluralism. Dow holds that though there is a plurality of theories within orthodoxy, there is no advocacy of such a position. She holds that orthodoxy has a monist methodology, in terms of what it does, and how it treats alternatives. Orthodoxy is monist in its method; by the way it defines the field in terms of its own method.

By contrast, she holds that heterodoxy is methodologically pluralist, in arguing for a range of approaches to economics. She singles out approaches which argue for a triangulation or mixing of methods as exemplifying a pluralist approach. Dow's position is perhaps (forgive the irony) orthodox in heterodoxy, whereas Holcombe's is not. From a pluralist perspective, it was clearly right to include them (and Dusek) here. Dow's article also shows considerable agreement with Holcombe on some features of the current debate on heterodoxy, orthodoxy and pluralism. She also notes the attempts by some to unite heterodoxy around a specific ontology, or method (which is also represented in Denis' paper below). She also makes an argument (albeit different from Holcombe's) for a plurality of methodologies. Dow also examines the 'market for ideas' metaphor discussed by Holcombe. She notes that of course, different schools of thought have different notions and roles of the market, which mean that an argument based on the market for ideas cannot be decisive. However, neither is it worthless.

All the papers in this issue examine that question to some degree. For Dow (and see Dow, "Structured"), pluralism allows schools of thought to exist without, *contra* Holcombe, this meaning that other views are excluded. For Dusek, the misconceptions of monism would be avoided, and implicitly, more openness about the reality of methods used in economics would be imported. For Holcombe,

pluralists do not make claims that their approach is inherently superior; they engage in debate; they adopt material and perspectives from other schools of thought; they do not exclude; and they utilise multiple approaches in their work.

Szostak's paper takes on many of these themes. The paper is necessarily abstract, dealing with a set of categories which a pluralist economics would need to address. Szostak draws parallels from interdisciplinarity literature to argue that economics should be pluralistic. Szostak specifically takes the position that pluralism is necessary because of the fallibility of all methods. Such a position is supported by Holcombe's paper. If the aim of economics is to understand the whole economy (although not merely in the sense of macroeconomics; rather at different levels of analysis), then all economic theories may have something to contribute. Szostak explicitly includes orthodox economics in his array of potentially useful theories. Szostak therefore explicitly takes up the challenge of Holcombe that heterodox economists should think of their theories as complements to rather than substitutes for orthodox theories.

Szostak then offers a series of recommendations to heterodox economists on their daily practice and on their overarching methodology. He argues for analysis which is integrative, i.e. ties together strands of thought, methods, and types of evidence. Given his interdisciplinary inspiration, it is perhaps unsurprising to find Szostak arguing for the importance of data (conceived of broadly) drawn from outside economics. This could be understood as another manifestation of Dow's open system approach to schools of thought, applied to the entire subject of economics. However, for those concerned that Szostak's project is a manifesto for uncritical relativism, he offers evidence against that. He is certainly not arguing against standards for enquiry. Rather, he introduces a considerable array of them. Further, he is critical of existing economists' scholarly practice and urges them to change. In that way, Szostak reflects the work of McCloskey (et al). Finally, he argues that the complexity of the world requires a wide range of theories and methods to be available, but that in each research case, a careful choice of theory and method is necessary to facilitate the most fruitful research action. The context constrains the method chosen. In that way, Szostak reflects and anticipates other heterodox work (for example, by Downward and Mearman, "Retroduction", "Decision-Making"). Objections to his approach might be made, however: for instance, that he assumes too much is possible, that there are limits to integration and to knowledge. Readers are urged to consult Szostak's larger body of work in

order to make a judgement on whether he is being over-optimistic or over-ambitious in his claims.

Bigo and Negru – incidentally, recent attendees at AHE postgraduate training sessions — offer an interesting contrast with both Dow's and Szostak's papers by examining causes of fragmentation and integration. They augment Dow's distinction between pluralism and plurality by defining the first as a process and the second as a product or outcome. They agree strongly with Szostak that some integration is desirable – for them it is essential to academic progress. However, they raise the question against Szostak's paper of why integration does not occur and why instead fragmentation occurs. They show that the relationship between integration, fragmentation and pluralism is complex and dynamic. They argue that many literatures are theoretically fragmented. This fragmentation results from both what they call non-resolution (disagreement) and non-assembly (specialisation). They also ask why fragmentation *persists*. They echo Szostak in highlighting elements of scholarly practice – and Dusek's analysis of the institutional reasons for monism within spheres – which encourage fragmentation not integration. One of the key issues they highlight is the existence of disciplinary boundaries. Like Szostak, they appeal for interdisciplinary work, perhaps organised around subject such as care, money and exchange.

They focus particularly on the ontological realm. In doing so, they echo the work of many others, including Dow, Szostak and Holcombe in this issue. Specifically they argue that fragmentation persists because of insufficient ontological explicitness in research. As a way to augment the situation, then, they argue that for what they call an 'ontologically reflexive pluralism', which, they argue could create greater integration of the currently fragmented literature. This ontologically reflexive pluralism allows for both integration by assembly and integration by resolution. Integration by assembly strongly echoes Szostak's integrative analysis; whereas, integration by resolution echoes Denis' discussion of dialectics. Thus, their paper expresses two agenda, one which involves a greater focus on ontology; the other being a view of pluralism as being coherent at some level but licensing plurality at other levels. In the latter way, their work mirrors Denis'. In the former, their approach echoes Dow, and others, such as Lawson, who have argued that heterodoxy be organised around ontological principles.

The paper by Denis attempts, in different ways and to different extents, to address Szostak's injunctions. Denis tries to exemplify pluralist principles. Denis examines

closely the work of Sciabarra on dialectics. Denis presents a critical analysis of Sciabarra's treatment of dialectical thought and the relations it suggests between Austrian economics and Marxism. Sciabarra argues that a focus on process, via dialectics, is a common ground between those perspectives. Denis finds that Sciabarra provides a compelling case for the superiority of dialectical over non-dialectical thought in economics.. Denis is also impressed that Sciabarra's account is a sympathetic treatment of Marxism and argues that Sciabarra provides a good example of how open, tolerant conversation between perspectives can occur. In that sense, Denis echoes the recommendations of Holcombe and Szostak. However, in the spirit of pluralist criticality, Denis subjects Sciabarra's analysis to criticism, finding that he disagrees with Sciabarra's treatment of totality – as epistemological rather than ontological – and of contradiction and immanent critique. Overall, though, Denis is sympathetic to Sciabarra's claims that Hayek (and by implication, Austrian economics more generally) takes a dialectical approach. He sees scope for dialogue between Austrianism and Marxism. Such dialogue is a subject of a significant stream of work in heterodoxy (see Fleetwood). Denis echoes Dusek (who discussed Mises and Menger in particular) who appealed that we ought to look again at Austrian treatments of economics, which are sometimes marginalised in heterodoxy, because of their perceived political bias, and arguably, their ignorance of class and power in their analysis.

In terms of pluralism, Denis' paper has many implications. First, it may, compared to Holcombe's arguments, appear to be anti-pluralistic, in that it may be seen to advocate dialectical over analytical reasoning. In fact, it does not really do that. It can be read as arguing that dialectical thought is superior, but nowhere is such a claim made, nor is an appeal made to ditch the analytical in favour of the dialectical. Denis is implicitly also pluralist in his open, tolerant, but nonetheless robust critique of Sciabarra's work. Indeed, Denis explicitly engages in the critique in order to move the debate forward. One reason for this is the potential development of common ground between different heterodox strands. Clearly, by discussing Marx, Hegel and Hayek (for example), Denis is focusing on possible areas of commonality between Austrianism and Marxism. This is a theme he has explored before. However, unlike treatments like (for example) Fleetwood's arguably does, Denis does not attempt to encompass the two perspectives under a broader umbrella (such as Critical Realism).

Further, Denis briefly sketches areas which could be explored in analysing the extent to which Keynes' work (and by extension, post Keynesian work) could be

considered dialectical. This move could be reasonably interpreted as being towards greater commonality and/or agreement between strands of heterodox thought. Again, it could be argued that this is an anti-pluralist manoeuvre. Certainly, Denis is arguing against mainstream methodology. Further, the creation of a unified heterodox approach based on a logic of dialectics could be interpreted as anti-pluralistic. However, of course, Denis is not arguing for that. Further, such a charge would illustrate one of the common confusions about pluralism: on many occasions, the discussion takes place at cross-purposes. Often, discussants are operating at different levels of analysis. Thus, while Denis' paper could be extrapolated to advocate the creation of a unified heterodox methodology (which it does not offer), that would be an argument made at the methodological level. But that does not imply reduced theoretical diversity. Denis' paper is also interesting in the light of Holcombe's critique. Denis both refutes and gives weight to Holcombe's arguments about heterodoxy. On the one hand, the superiority of an approach – dialectics – is *implicitly* held; but also Denis is demonstrating open-mindedness and tolerance, and a willingness to cross-fertilise ideas. This may lead to some consolidation (for instance if there developed a shared methodology of Austrian and Marxism). However, more likely, irrespective of consolidatory developments, Austrian and Marxian would be likely to continue as identifiable entities, thus preserving plurality. Significantly, Denis appears to be operating in the spirit of pluralism. However, as ever the matter is not that simple: it could be argued that in the desire to converge on a particular methodological approach could be considered monist.

Conclusions

This issue brings together several papers on the theme of pluralism, all of which were presented at the conferences of the Association for Heterodox Economics in 2005 and 2006. The theme chosen is appropriate because, broadly, 'pluralism in economics' was the driving theme of both conferences. The conferences themselves (as is the AHE tradition) also tried to exemplify pluralism, by bringing together scholars of disparate stripes in a collegiate environment, in which allegiance to one school or another – and this emphatically includes orthodox, mainstream, neo-classical economists – is no barrier to participation.

The papers address a devilishly difficult question, that of pluralism. The papers illustrate what was known already: that any conversation about pluralism is

extremely difficult: it is even difficult to arrive at exhaustive lists of possible definitions of and arguments for pluralism. An apparently pessimistic conclusion must be reached: that developments of the concept of pluralism will emerge only slowly – and the implementation of pluralism slower still. The discussion also illustrates the difficult faced by the AHE itself: should it retain a label 'heterodox' which some consider unhelpful, or should it adopt pluralism as a moniker? The latter has its advantages; but its flexibility may also be its strength, in that anyone can claim to be pluralistic: doesn't everyone enjoy good weather, or oppose murder? Pluralistic practice does not necessarily follow pluralistic statements of intention. That is one of the original reasons for the formation of the AHE.

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