

Summer 1987

have not understood. If they understood the argument I think they would agree with it, since it merely retails a liberal intellectuality that they themselves practice. The idea that economics might be "criticized" in the sense of literary criticism is implicit in much of their own work. Yet they do not understand. They misread the text. Then they get angry and abusive about what they think it says. What is puzzling is that the non-methodologists by contrast do not seem to have the same trouble reading or the same emotional reaction to what they have read.<sup>1</sup>

Scholars and scientists have no reasonable theory of misreading. When we misread someone else's text we say that the text is badly written—but I think Blaug would say that the text here is not so badly written. When someone else misreads our own text, on the other hand, we academics usually say that the readers are stupid or malicious or lazy—but since Blaug, A. W. Coats, Bruce Caldwell, Alexander Rosenberg, Wade Wands, and the others are intelligent, well-disposed, open-minded, and hard-working the usual academic calumnies would be absurd. The usual calumnies are usually absurd. Most of the people who disagree with us, even though they are misguided, are doing their best, and their best is usually good.

One is left with the Kantian filter, the Marxist ideology, the pragmatic context. These men come to the argument with a theory of science drawn from philosophy. Their theories do not accommodate what I say, because what I say uses the rhetorical and literary half of the Western conversation. So quite naturally they force my words to fit the philosophy, lopping off the excess in the manner of Procrustes. No blame attaches. Their response illustrates a major theme in the book, as we all do each day: that argument is culturally bound, bound in this case by the culture of modernism.

For instance, Blaug and the other methodologists focus on the book's first three chapters, which argue that methodology as conventionally practiced is unhelpful to economics. One can see why the early chapters attract the methodologists: it is speech in their culture, however much they dislike the message. The non-methodologists by contrast focus on the last seven chapters, which offer detailed examples of literary criticism. A literary criticism of economics will seem strange only to a scholar who has invested a lot in its *philosophical* criticism. As Blaug does, he will try to fit the literary criticism to the philosophy. By contrast the non-methodologist has the advantage of naiveté, and does not have to lop off the main work.

Again, the methodologists complain that I attack methodology yet

### *The Two Cultures and Methodology*

#### TO THE EDITOR:

I am sincerely puzzled that my friend Mark Blaug ["Methodology with a Small m," Spring, 1987] cannot understand the argument of my book, *The Rhetoric of Economics*. Over the past few years he and several other economic methodologists have participated in conversations about it, and I have personally tried to make it clear to them. But they

adopt a methodology. Blaug makes this point at length. His Kantian filter does not let through the argument that useful method is a matter either of low technicalities (as in the chapters on significance tests) or of high moralities (as in the chapters on the use of style to defend Science.) He does not have an answer to the observation that middle-level and philosophical Methodology has made our scientific culture narrow and intolerant. As someone who has fought narrowness and intolerance in economics throughout his career, Blaug I am sure agrees. The leading case of such intolerance is Karl Popper's use of rigid falsificationism to expel Marxists and psychoanalysts from his "open society." In economics the adoption of the middle level rules Blaug ill-advisedly advocates has made economists technically incompetent to deal with statistical significance and morally incompetent to deal with public policy.

Finally, the methodologists assert that I oppose empirical tests. This is Blaug's "silly boy" rhetoric at the end of his piece. (By the way, a study of sneering in academic prose would be fruitful; a working hypothesis might be that sneers drive out other arguments.) The rhetoric is one of desperation, showing how little the methodologists have understood. They have believed for so long that modernism gives a complete account of how the world should affect one's opinions that now they cannot understand broader and more realistic accounts. Either you buy into modernism or you must be some kind of nut. It is the sort of intellectual breadth and tolerance that we have come to expect from the line of Plato, Descartes, and Russell.

Let me reaffirm that I am not against empirical tests, and assert that nothing in the book suggests that I am. *Of course* the "past retrodictions" of monetarism are arguments that we take seriously. (By the way, again, a criterion of retrodiction would erase the demarcation between science and non-science, since astrology easily passes the test; for me this is no problem, since I do not see any use for the demarcation except to close the society, but those like Blaug who are interested in the demarcation may wish to take note.) *Of course* "empirical data" are relevant. Someone who has done as much economic history as I have could hardly speak otherwise.

The point of the book, which Blaug's Kantian filter has prevented him from seeing, is that modernism narrows the meaning of "retrodiction" and "data" down to a nub of meaninglessness. Retrodiction, after all, is the telling of stories, a matter of economic rhetoric to which I have lately given some attention. And the "data" include our self-awareness. The methodology that Blaug advocates would leave us un-

able to think about storytelling or introspection. The literary criticism that I advocate would allow us to consider these, and tests of significance, too.

I believe Blaug when he says that he was "unable to understand" my reply to Caldwell and Coats.<sup>2</sup> It is difficult to understand French if one does not really believe it is different from English. I hope we can avoid the reaction of the British tourist when confronted with a Frenchman: shout louder, in English.

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#### NOTES

1. For instance, Robert Heilbroner, "The Murky Economists," *New York Review of Books*, April 24, 1986; cf. John Coates, *Times Literary Supplement*, August 1, 1986; and, in another vein, Tom G. Palmer, "An Economist Looks at His Science," *Humane Studies Review* 4 (Winter 1986-87).
2. *Journal of Economic Literature* 21, no. 2 (June 1984). Some other attempts to bridge the two cultures are my "Sartorial Epistemology in Tatters: A Reply to Martin Hollis," *Economics and Philosophy* 1 (April 1985): 134-137; "A Dialogue on the Two Methodological Systems," *Eastern Economic Journal*, October-December 1985: 293-296; and "Review of D. W. Fiske and R. A. Shweder's *Metatheory in Social Science*," *Contemporary Sociology* (November 1986).