

INHERENT INTER-DISCIPLINARITY OF ECONOMICS (II)

1. How works an inter-disciplinary approach?

In a previous intervention the inter-disciplinarity in approaching Economics was been clarified in some extent. However, it was not clear how the disciplines to be used in a given approach must be selected to work together inter-disciplinarily. Of course, a first criterion should be the potential of all disciplines selected to cooperate among them (at the best, to mutually exchange methods, tools and techniques of research). But this is not enough. In others words, such a methodological compatibility is a necessary condition, but not a sufficient one. Why that? Because the inter-disciplinary „mix” of disciplines to be engaged into the research is never universal, that is, it is never appropriate to any purpose. So, the second criterion to form the inter-disciplinary „mix” in approaching a cognitive object (in our case, an economic object to be known) should be the purpose targeted in the research demarche. Any distinct research purpose indicates a distinct composition of the inter-disciplinary „mix” appropriate to be used. For this reason, for example, I am surprised that some doctoral schools delivers the same set of preparing courses for the Ph.D. students, no matter the different objectives of the specific doctoral theses. It is obvious in this case that the first criterion of forming the inter-disciplinary „mix” is verified, namely, the methodological compatibility among the disciplines selected in the doctoral stage curriculum, but not the second criterion too. Of course, it is not possible to provide a different inter-disciplinary „mix” for every doctoral purpose, but the doctoral purposes could be aggregated into a small number of classes of doctoral research subjects, so for any such a class be composed a distinct inter-disciplinary „mix”. In the case of economic field of research, there are not too many such classes of doctoral research subjects, so a small number of packages of inter-disciplinary „mixes” could be designed and provided.

2. Why Economics needs an inter-disciplinary approach only?

As shown in the first part regarding the issue of inter-disciplinarity in the economic field, both Economics as theory, and the economic field as objective reality need an inter-disciplinary approach. The question now is: is such a requirement exclusively? In other words, could Economics or the economic field be approached also through a non-inter-disciplinary way? So, if in the previous intervention, I have tried to „demonstrate” the inevitability of the inter-disciplinary approach in Economics, in the present one I want to show, at least principled, the exclusivity of such an approaching. Indeed, the economic behaviour is the only „object” we can empirically observe, measure and interpret (saying this, I want not to convoke the behaviourism at all, but only I want to prepare the needed argument in the case). As a result, we need imperatively to use an inter-disciplinary approach to understand what stays behind the observed behaviour, because that observed behaviour is determined (causally, structurally, and functionally) by many factors: values, habits (in Bourdieu’s or Hodgson’s theories), social structures/institutions, etc. Since such factors are constitutive to the human being (either related to its nature or to its condition), i.e., they are indispensable, the logical consequence is that an inter-disciplinary approach of the economic behaviour is the only such an approach, under the sanction the analysis be irrelevant. So, now we have both the condition of necessity and that of sufficiency in claiming the inter-disciplinary approach on Economics as theory and on the economic field as objective reality.

3. How to ensure the inter-disciplinary approach in Economics?

Ensuring the inter-disciplinarity approach in Economics is not a question of management of research only but, more, a question of cultural attitude. Although it is not compulsory, of course, that a single

individual to hold an inter-disciplinary potential of research (without saying this is not possible anymore in the current days), it is, however, compulsory such an individual be aware regarding the compulsoriness of the inter-disciplinary approaching. In such conditions, that individual not only will accept the interventions of other disciplines but, more, will actively search and require the mentioned interventions. What I am trying to say is that the inter-disciplinarity can work if, primarily, the researcher is aware about such a necessity. The competence to do the inter-disciplinary research effort is just the secondary stage, and it is causal (and chronological) depending on the first one, i.e. the awareness about the compulsoriness of the inter-disciplinary approach. My opinion in this question is researchers in Economics should be simultaneously trained in the competence issue and in the attitude one. Other way around, the standard school as well as the training within the doctoral stage will continue to prepare and to maintain the mass of neo-classicists which will continue to hold Economics in the shadow of a Physics and of a Mathematics without any relevance (both cognitive and pragmatic) for the economic field. Of course, once the inter-disciplinary attitude gained, it must proceed further to induce the proper technique for the inter-disciplinary approaching, but never in the inverted logical and chronological order.

4. What might be the results of the inter-disciplinary approach in Economics?

Although some instrumentalists in the economic field (among them the most illustrious is, probably, Milton Friedman) claim not more than an empirical efficacy of our economic theories/hypotheses, the case is, obviously, more large, more complicated, and more important to be leaved at the disposal only of such instrumentalists. Probably I would can say more: the issue is too important to be leaved at the disposal of economists only, especially if such economists which are trained (by ordinary school or by other training mechanisms) in the mass culture of the neo-classical model of Economics. The reflection on the inherence of inter-disciplinarity in Economics should be required to those economists or philosophers which possesses the cultural background or mind horizon to understand the Economics is, by its own nature, exposed to inter-disciplinarity. If such a convoking is done, so I think the main results should be as follows: a) a propensity of Economics to reconstruct (or to find from the beginning) its own ontology, based, as I many times have already showed, on the relationship subject-object interested in illuminate the subject; b) a propensity of Economics to reconstruct (or to find from the beginning) its own epistemological bases; probably such an epistemology could be called as sinepistemology; c) a propensity of Economics to reconstruct (or to find from the beginning) its own methodology (which should not resemble neither with the methodology in Physics, nor with the methodology in other natural disciplines – witch do not contain human subjects in their ontologies); d) a propensity of Economics to reconstruct (or to find from the beginning) its own finality, which differs from the finality of any natural disciplines: namely, the quality of life of the human being as individual necessarily integrated into social groups.

5. What about the trans-disciplinarity potential hosted by Economics?

Having in mind the inter-disciplinary vocation of Economics as theory and of the economic field as objective reality, I am convinced about the potentiality of Economics to transcend its current condition (as slave of the disciplinarity of natural ontology, natural epistemology, and natural methodology) towards a new appropriate disciplinarity (so, to experience a trans-disciplinarity process). Such a new disciplinarity requires, primarily, a new philosophy of Economics. I would start the construction of the new philosophy of Economics with the reflection about the proper language (even about the proper formalism) of Economics or of economic reality (maybe about the social reality). So, for economists as well as for philosophers it seems to be much and hard to work.