

PROFESSOR ANASTASSIOS KARAYIANNIS, 4 OCTOBER 1955 - 14
JANUARY 2012: ACADEMIC ECONOMIST AND SCHOLAR

History of Economic Thought and Policy, No.2, 2012

By

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Acknowledgements: I am grateful to A. Karayiannis's other co-authors and especially to S. Drakopoulou-Dodd and to I.. Katselidis.

I. Introduction.

The international scholarly community of the historians of economics was saddened to learn that Professor Anastassios Karayiannis passed away on January 14 2012, after a short illness. The deceased was a well-known contributor to academic economics, and especially to the history of economic ideas and method. According to most of his Greek colleagues, Professor Karayiannis was also one of the most distinguished historians of economic thought of his generation in Greece. Professor Karayiannis had a lifelong passion for the study of the history of economic ideas and method. His interest on the subject was not confined to one era or school of economic thought, as his contributions, ranging from the study of Ancient Greek economic ideas to contemporary economic theorists, indicate. Professor Karayiannis's papers appeared in almost all of the specialist history of economic thought journals, including *History of Economic Thought and Policy* (aka *Storia del Pensiero Economico*) where five of his papers were published.

Although the history of economic ideas and method was his prime research interest, it was not by any means the only one. The nature, role and history of entrepreneurship, the economic and social institutions of Ancient Greece, and contemporary Greek economic policy, were also part of his research agenda. The study of social values and social institutions as determinants of economic efficiency was another recent research interest of his. Papers published in a diversity of journals, such as the *European Journal of Political Economy*, *Bulletin of Economic Research*, *European Journal of Law and Economics*, and *Journal of Institutional Economics*, demonstrate his wide range of academic research. Given the extent of his publications and the space constraints, the presentation of his

academic contributions will necessarily be selective with more emphasis on his work on economic thought and method. I have also chosen to follow a presentational conceptual criterion which I think, is not far from his personal research categorization¹.

II. Scientific Biography

Professor Karayiannis was born on the island of Aegina (near Piraeus) in October 4, 1955. After completing his undergraduate studies in economics at the Athens University of Economics and Business, he finished his M.Phil. at the University of Dundee, Scotland. His M.Phil. thesis, entitled "*Sir James Steuart (1713-1780): On Political Economy*", was carried out under the supervision of Dr Alec Gee. His doctorate thesis entitled "*Theories of Entrepreneurial Profit from Classical Time until Today*" was completed at the University of Piraeus under the supervision of Professor Lazaros Homanidis. During his postgraduate years, Anastassios was an associate of various Greek higher education institutes teaching a large variety of economic courses. His first academic appointment was as a lecturer at the University of Piraeus in 1987. In 2008 he was elected full professor to the Chair of the History of Economic Thought at the Department of Economic Science of the University of Piraeus, where he served until his premature death. This well-deserved election was somewhat belated, in my own view, which is also shared by many of our Greek colleagues, given his substantial research achievements. Professor Karayiannis had also served as a visiting professor to a number of Greek and foreign Universities, including the University of Athens, Athens University of Economics and Business, the Polytechnic

¹ See also Drakopoulos (2012).

University of Bucharest, and Lappeenranta University of Technology, Finland. Anastassios mainly taught undergraduate and postgraduate courses in the History of Economic Thought, Economic Methodology and Theory of Entrepreneurship.

Professor Karayiannis was an active promoter of the study of history of economic ideas, as his membership of many European and international academic societies in the field demonstrates. He was also one of the founding members of the Society for the Greek Historians of Economic Thought, thus supporting and advancing the presence of the field in his native country. Apart from his scientific papers, he also contributed to the subject by serving as a referee to most specialist journals, as a member of the editorial boards of Journals, and as a participant in dozens of national and international conferences. He had also presented academic seminars in many Greek and foreign institutions including universities in the UK, Romania, Finland, and Russia.

III. Academic Research Output

As was mentioned above, Professor Karayiannis produced a considerable number of publications in a range of economic subfields. His prolific output, cut short by his untimely death, consisted of ten original books, three textbooks, and over one hundred academic articles in journals and edited books. His research output was also supplemented by numerous entries in specialized Encyclopaedias and dictionaries. A substantial part of his research falls into the broad category of history of economic thought and method. Papers apparently relating to other economic fields, often exhibit a marked historical dimension too. Thus, any classification of research output along standard lines, is bound to be

arbitrary. Given my personal acquaintance with his lifetime work, both as a consumer and sometimes as a co-author of his publications, I think that the following conceptual classification at least would not have made him unhappy.

1. History of Economic Thought

A. Pre-Classical and Classical Economic Thought

The economic ideas of the Pre-classical thinkers and especially of the Ancient world, was an area in which Anastassios made significant contributions. Two of his early published papers examined the main ideas of Democritus (1988a) and of Plato (1990a)². His extensive knowledge of the Ancient Greek philosophers enabled him to analyze their economic ideas and their ensuing impact on the development of economic thought (see also Karayiannis, 1998a). The lasting influence of these ideas, was one of his favorite research themes as his subsequent works indicate (see for instance, with Ithakissios 1999 and with Baloglou 2009). The economic ideas of Sir James Steuart, which was the subject of his doctoral thesis, was another topic of his interest, resulting in a number of journal and edited book publications (e.g. 1988b; 1994b). Related to his deep knowledge and fascination with the pre-classical economic thinking, are his papers on the Eastern Christian Fathers (1994a; with Drakopoulou-Dodd 1998). His work brought attention to their very interesting and often pioneering ideas on distribution and accumulation of wealth, economic behaviour and taxation and also of altruism and almsgiving. There is also a forthcoming paper (with Katselidis) on wages and work effort in English pre-classical economic thought.

² All the references by date refer to Karayiannis. In the case of joint work, the name of the co-author is mentioned before the publication date.

The paper evaluates the theoretical arguments which specify the pre-classical theses for or against low real wages and analyses the relationship between wages and individuals' work effort.

Classical economic thought was also another strand of Anastassios research. The neglected contribution of Rowland Hamilton to the theory of risk and entrepreneurship, and its resemblance to the theories developed by Cantillon and Knight, is the subject of his first paper focusing on classical economics (1992a). In a similar vein, he demonstrated that Robert Torrens' writings on the causes and effects of technological progress and its relation to economic growth (2000) have been overlooked by most specialists. Extensive analysis on individual economic behaviour is rather unusual in classical economic thought. However, as his paper on Nassau Senior (2001) indicates, a fairly detailed discussion of the role of behavioural assumptions and psychological motivations can be found in the writings of this prominent classical economist.

B. Recent History of Economic Thought

Influential figures in the history of economic thought, such as T. Veblen, J. M. Keynes and L. Klein, was another stream of his research. Anastassios was interested in Veblen's ideas on entrepreneurship (with Griffin 2002), a more detailed discussion of which will be conducted in a subsequent subsection. The paper on Keynes (with Petridis 2001) studied Keynes's awareness of the constraints on the effectiveness of economic policy. According to the authors, the major set of constraints had to do with the inability of politicians to comprehend and apply sound economic policies, and also with the exclusion of

academic economists. The paper on Lawrence Klein (2004) examines the main aspects of Klein's economic thought, including Keynesian macroeconomic modeling, the development of econometric techniques, the conduct of economic policy, and also Klein's views on the history and method of economics. Another paper on modern history of economic thought had to do with the monetary views of Twentieth Century Greek economists (1987). More specifically, this work examines the influence of the quantity theory of money, advanced by M. Friedman and the Chicago School in the 1960s, to twentieth century Greek economic thought. Two other works investigate the development of a particular concept in the history of economic thought. The first one (with Drakopoulos, 2004) presents a comprehensive study of hierarchical behaviour, (an alternative model of rational choice), and its evolution in the history of economic ideas. In a similar tone, the second article (with Drakopoulos, 2007) examines the concept of happiness or subjective well-being in the writings of influential pre-classical and classical authors. Finally, his last paper on history of economic thought, while he was still alive, was published in this journal (with Katselidis, 2012). The article discussed the different conception of the effects of technological progress between classical and neoclassical approaches.

2. Economic Methodology

Research in the history of economic thought is very often vitally connected to the study of economic methodology. Anastassios believed that the study of the history of economic thought goes hand-in-hand with the study of economic methodology: past and current methodological disputes cannot be understood without the aid of research in the history of economic ideas. In his own words: "The history of different methodological approaches that various economists have

followed, is a necessary complement to the study of the history of economic thought” (1995, p.14). It is indeed quite interesting that after a decade of research in the history of economic ideas, he turned his attention to the study of methodological issues. Always keeping an historical perspective, he was interested in the process of the development of schools of economic thought and also of the historiography of economics. One of his most important contributions in this subfield, was his textbook entitled *History of Economic Methodology* published in Greek (1995, revised edition 2001). This work is unique in the Greek economic literature in the sense that it discusses, in great detail, the main methodological views of major schools of economic thought, starting from the 17th century and continuing up to the modern methodological intellectual currents on philosophy and methodology of economics. His paper on the historiography of economics studies the selectivity criteria and the methodological approach adopted in the written histories of economics (1998b). The vital connection between economic thought and methodology is also obvious here. More specialist works such as with Drakopoulos (1999), examine the process of the establishment of mainstream consumer theory. The article also discusses the main methodological reasons for the eventual dominance of the theory as a core element of Neoclassical economics. In the same tone, a subsequent paper that we also wrote together (2005), investigates the influence of Kuhn’s and Lakatos’ philosophies of science in economics.

3. History of Entrepreneurship

The history of ideas concerning the function and the significance of entrepreneurship was a theme which was of particular appeal to Anastassios.

His interest in entrepreneurship was combined with his extensive knowledge of the history of economic ideas, and as a result, most of his contributions are characterized by a fruitful synthesis of the two. One of his first papers on this subject (1990b) provides a general review of the entrepreneurial function in economic literature. In the same spirit, his next paper focuses on the ideas on entrepreneurship that can be discerned in Classical Greek Literature (1992b). After a presentation of entrepreneurial activity in ancient Greece, and particularly in Athens, he analyses the views of ancient Greek writers on the role of the entrepreneur. The paper argues that the ideas held by many Greek authors, and particularly by Xenophon and the orators on the subject of entrepreneurship, are still relevant in contemporary approaches.

The paper on Veblen (with Griffin 2002) analyzed Veblen's views of the causes and effects of the transformation of commercial-industrial entrepreneur into the new form of financial entrepreneur. There is also a connection of this to Veblen's evolutionary and holistic methodological approach, as well as to his business theory. A conceptual continuation of this paper is another reviewing the American contributions to entrepreneurship mainly of the late 19th and early 20th centuries (2005). The works of Ely, Hadley, Taussig, Davenport, J. B. Clark among others, are some of the theories examined. The paper concludes that entrepreneurship theory was more advanced in the US in comparison to the European based theories of the same period.

The papers on Marshall (2009) and Keynes (2008) discuss the ideas on entrepreneurship of these two leading theorists. Anastassios argues that both Marshall and Keynes' views belong to the old British classical tradition, which conceived the entrepreneur as the economic agent who organizes and

superintends the production process. Although Keynes did not develop a distinct entrepreneurial theory, his ideas are influenced by this tradition and especially by Marshall.

4. Economic and Social Institutions

In the last few years, Professor Karayiannis developed an active interest in the role of institutions and social values for economic and political efficiency. As a result a number of papers, mainly with the collaboration of Professor G. Bitros, emerged (with Bitros, 2008; 2011a; also with Hatzis forthcoming). His main contribution to this research project was his deep knowledge of the history of economics and of the economic and social institutions of ancient Greece, combined with his work on entrepreneurship. His last major research endeavour, which attempted to provide a synthesis of the above in order to understand the modern politico-economic framework, was a book monograph (with Professor G. Bitros, 2011b), which was published a few days before his death. This new research program was a source of excitement for him, and he was planning to expand it in the future.

IV. Some Personal Reflections

The previous discussion was a personal selection of Anastassios' research output attempting to give a general picture of his lifetime contributions. The extent of his contributions, the wide range of his interests, and his painstaking research methodology, clearly demonstrated his deep affection for scholarship. However, I think that the history of economic thought and method was his academic passion, which was powered by his belief in its paramount role for the comprehension of the full dimensions of current intellectual economic discourse, and also of

ideological arguments. He was convinced that most contemporary theoretical formulations, models and also economic policy proposals, can eventually be traced back to the history of economics. Thus, he often emphasized that one of the prime benefits of historical research is its input to the better comprehension of present-day issues and problems of economic policy. As the following passage states:

“The historians of economic thought, apart from their other contributions, supply their colleagues in other fields of economics, with a stock of knowledge from which they can freely draw, thus enabling them to better explaining economic phenomena and also to providing possible solutions to urgent problems”. (Karayiannis, 1998a, p. 25).

In this light, one can understand better his constant efforts towards the promotion of the scientific and pedagogic value of the history of economic ideas as a subfield of economics. The recent trend of marginalization of the subject, observed in a number of economic departments, was therefore a cause of major disappointment and concern for him. However, in line with his constant optimism, he believed that this trend can and must be reversed. His multiple activities in serving and promoting the field that were mentioned above, was his conscious contribution to this reversal.

Professor Karayiannis untimely passing away brought sorrow to those that knew him and had experienced his zeal for research and his willingness to provide new insights and ideas on a wide range of topics. The international community of the historians of economics was fortunate to have him among their ranks. I had the privilege of being one of them, appreciating his academic commitment, enthusiasm and integrity, and also enjoying his extremely good company and jolly character. Anastassios - “Tassos” - is survived by his wife

Antonia and his three children: Dionyssios, George and Christina. His memory will survive among his countless students, his co-authors, colleagues and friends.

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