



Some remarks on the putative knowledge of textbook economics

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Growing economics textbook research

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[...]

Outline

1. Two guiding questions
2. Epistemic motivation and knowledge (in economics)
3. Political motivation and knowledge (in economics)
4. Concluding Remarks
5. Literature

1. Two guiding questions

1. *Why* does the economist want to know in the first place?

2. *How* does the economist know?

2. Epistemic motivation and knowledge

Epistemic Will (Will to Willessness)



virtuous knowledge about the criteria of a 'good' act of knowledge acquisition (process knowledge) + application of it



scientific knowledge of epistemically accessible phenomena as a result (result knowledge)

Epistemic process according to Daston/Galison 2007

2. Scientific motivation and knowledge in economics

„[John Stuart; L.B.] Mill [...] speaks of an equation as only a proper mathematical analogy. But if Economics is to be a real science at all, it must not deal merely with analogies; it must reason by real equations, like all the other sciences which have reached at all a systematic character.“

(Jevons 1965 [1871], 101)

„There is a higher economics just as there is a higher physics, to both of which a mathematical treatment is appropriate [...] The introduction of mathematical method marks a stage of growth – perhaps it is not too extravagant to say, the entrance of political economy on a scientific era.“

(Fisher 1965 [1892], 109)

2. Epistemic motivation and knowledge in economics

Epistemic will ('pure science')



Scientifically inspired criteria for a 'good' epistemic act
(process knowledge, here: methodological knowledge)



economic-scientific knowledge (result knowledge)

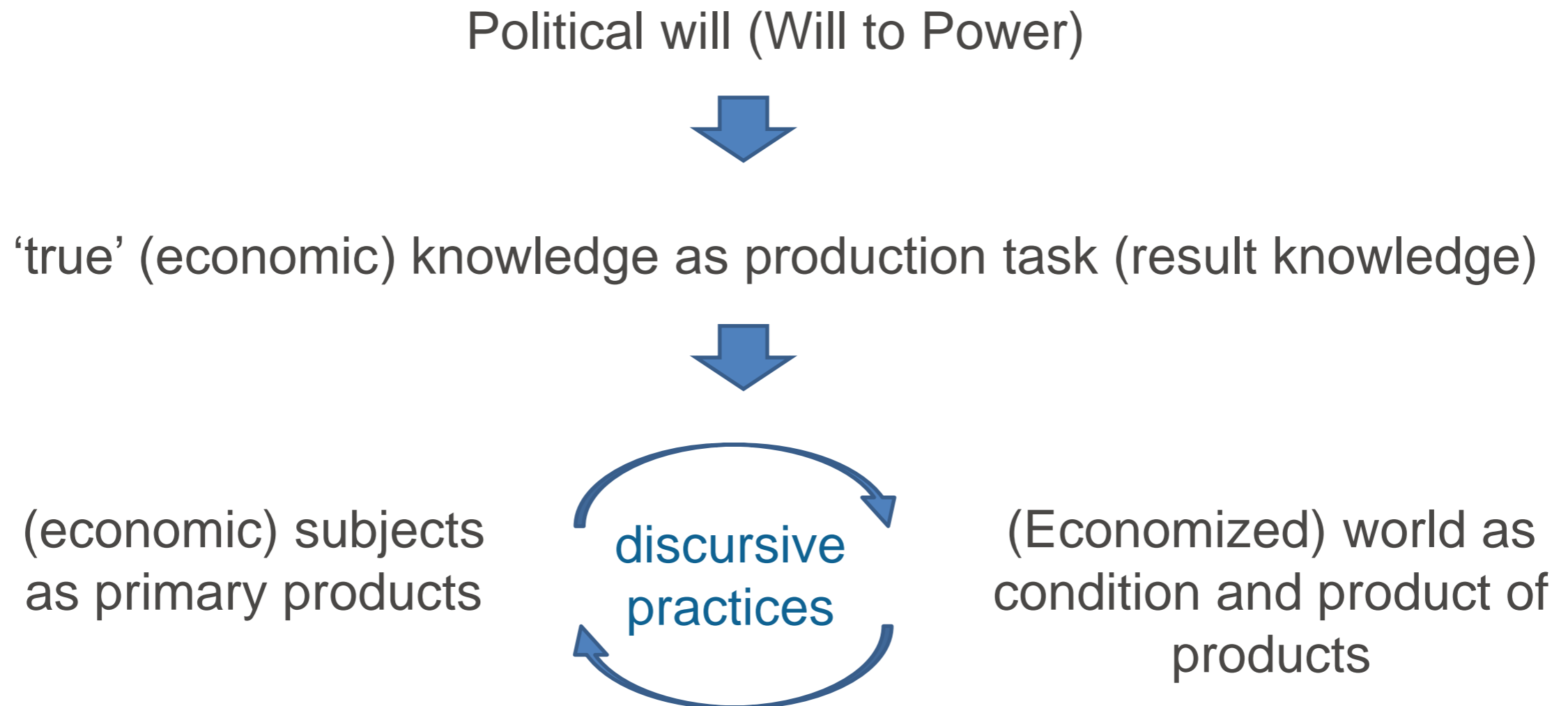
Epistemic process in early neoclassical economics

2. Epistemic motivation and knowledge in economics

Two guiding questions:

1. Why does the early neoclassical economist want to know in the first place?
 - > to attain scientific knowledge
2. How does the early neoclassical economist know?
 - > by means of epistemic rules originating from the natural sciences

3. (Modern) Political motivation and knowledge



Hierarchy of politico-economic will and knowledge based on Foucault

3. Political motivation and knowledge in economics

‘true’ (economic) knowledge as an production task (result knowledge)

„there are a few basic concepts that underpin all of economics [...] We have therefore chosen to focus on the central core of economics – on those enduring truths that will be just as important in the twenty-first century as they were in the twentieth.“

(Samuelson/Nordhaus 2010, xviii-xix)

3. Political motivation and knowledge in economics

Political will & subjects as primary products

„In making these decisions [choosing textbook contents, L.B.], I am guided by the fact that, in introductory economics, the typical student is not a future economist but is a future voter. I include the topics that I believe are essential to help **produce** well-informed citizens.“

(Mankiw 2016, 170; acc. L.B.)

“Our ultimate goal is to **produce** economic naturalists – people who see each human action as the result of an implicit or explicit cost-benefit calculation”

(Frank/Bernanke/Johnston 2013, viii; acc. L.B.)

3. Political motivation and knowledge in economics

Two guiding questions:

1. Why does the textbook student want to know in the first place?

-> question of no importance

2. How does the textbook student know?

-> by adopting economic truths/principles

4. Concluding remarks

Epistemic reorientation in economic education

- Educating students towards a self-reflexive **choice** of epistemic virtues (overcoming the ‚putative‘ character of knowledge)
 - Introduction to historical and contemporary plurality of epistemic cultures
- Educating students in a thorough **application** of epistemic virtues
 - See for the case of neoclassical economics (Chiang/Wainwright 2005)
- Sensibilization for non-scientific aspects or dangers in mainstream economic education
- development of standards for good pedagogical and didactical practice in economic education

5. Literature

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