JUDGING ECONOMICS TEACHING AND TEXTBOOKS

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In recent decades, a collection of economists, including Deirdre McCloskey, Arjo Klamer and Diana Strassmann, have given considerable attention to writer-reader (or speaker-listener) relations. These economists have resisted the dominant image of language in economics, namely that of a transparent tool that a writer (or speaker) uses in communicating ideas to a reader (or listener). They invite the adoption of an image of language as a medium for constituting and reconstituting relations. Economists are storytellers and, as such, composers of selves and audiences and relations between them.

Those economists who have taken the 'narrative turn' believe that economists can learn much of great value from literary critics, especially those who have talked about the activity of reading as an interactive experience. In a review of literary critic James Boyd White's *When Words Lose Their Meaning*, Klamer wrote:

> This seems to be an odd book to consider in an economics journal. . . . A few years back I was one of those who questioned the raison d'etre of literary critics. Their writing about writing seemed absurd and futile. What is it, I wondered, that they do not produce literature themselves. Much of the suspicion, although not all, has disappeared since then. Mathematicians have been good counselors for economists in pursuit of modernist ideals of rigor and exactness. Likewise, literary critics, I believe now, could turn out to be good comrades for those economists who are interested in reading and interpretation (1990: 239).

In *When Words Lose Their Meaning* White (1984: 18) offered two criteria for textual criticism: the constitution of equality of all people at the level of citizenship, and the integration of parts of self and experience into meaningful wholes. A summary outline of these criteria cannot do them justice, but I hope to bring them to life here whilst engaging in criticism. I begin with a discussion of an economist's story about his teaching experiences. I then critically examine a textbook written for first-time economics students.

Teaching

The economist's story with which this section engages is Peter Earl's essay *Indeterminacy in the Economics Classroom* (2000), which has much in common with the work of David Colander (2000) and Michael K. Salemi and W. Lee Hansen (2005), among others, who are seeking to introduce 'complexity' and 'discussion' into the teaching of economics. Earl relates his own mismatches of expectations and experiences along with mismatches between himself and his students (all page references that follow are to his essay, unless otherwise stated). He applies the edifying work of educationalist William Perry, who identified a sequence of different ways of thinking that students tend to pass through. There are six levels in this scheme of cognitive and ethical development (28-31). The levels are: (1) Dualism; (2) Dualism questioned; (3) Multiplicity; (4) Anything goes? (5) Relativism; (6) Tentative commitments to personal viewpoints. Before hearing Earl's story, we tune in to these levels through Earl's summary of them.

Level 1, 'Dualism', 'is a world-view in which students see things in dualistic terms: everything is expected to be either black or white.' Such a binary opposition has the great value of capturing the diversity of the world within their either/or extremes, but it is has great limits in a world with varying shades of grey. Students who think in dualistic terms carry these expectations: 'if they work hard, following up every reading instruction and learning the Right Answers, they will be duly rewarded at examination time for demonstrating to their teachers their diligence and grasp of the Truth.' Concerning the way these students imagine themselves in relation to their teachers: 'Dualistic students see themselves rather as empty vessels waiting to be filled with the truth and having a duty to pay attention in lectures, taking down what their teachers say and afterwards memorising it.'

Level 2, 'Dualism questioned', is facilitated by teachers who 'challenge things . . . in textbooks', and who 'leave their classes with unresolved problems rather than sets of answers.' Such teachers are severing the chord to the 'Garden of Eden' stage.

Level 3, 'Multiplicity', is attained when a student thinks seriously about the student-teacher relationship: 'if supposed experts can keep on arguing amongst themselves and cannot tell their students what the truth is, then why should they be seen as experts in their field?' With such a question circulating the mind, one appreciates that the examination 'can no longer be seen merely as counting correct pieces of information.' The activity of doing justice becomes central: the student 'begins to wonder whether teachers can be trusted to be fair if the latter hold strong opinions on issues about which they set questions.'

At Level 4, 'Anything goes?', students have grown 'more confident about challenging what their teachers say and see greater value in class discussions in which they can share with their peers their ideas on how particular issues might be seen.' Students start seeing that teachers are rewarding them 'on the basis of whether they are able to think about things in particular ways . . . and can justify the conclusions that they reach.'

At Level 5, students are able to step into the shoes of others; and they are granting increasing authority to their own experiences: 'Students begin to see that in interacting with other people it helps to try to understand how they are thinking – where they are coming from and what is important to them.' Concerning the imagined student-teacher relationship, the students 'begin to realise that their teachers can serve as models of how people can make sense of uncertainties about their beliefs and can help them think critically about their own experiences and ways of making judgments, and the views of others.'

At Level 6, one has developed into a person capable of real experience and of granting authority to her or his own judgment.[1] In short, students have developed a voice that can be called their own. Students 'achieve their individuality by opting not simply to copy others but by making commitments following much soul searching'. These commitments are not absolute, for the person 'will remain open to change.' A source of change will reside in one's own capacity to listen to others and to ask probing questions, a capacity stimulated through interaction with a questioning and listening teacher.

Earl uses this sequence to help make sense of his own experience in the classroom. He explains what happened when he tried teaching price theory in terms of a history of thinking about pricing and competition from Alfred Marshall to contestability theory. Part of his story is as follows:

> My intention had been to demonstrate to the class that economists can spend decade after decade stumbling from one puzzle to another, misunderstanding each other and going round in circles reinventing each other's ideas, with key questions remaining unresolved. I then expected to show the class how, despite the mess, they might begin to feel comfortable with most of the ideas, not simultaneously but in different applied contexts. With hindsight, my strategy amounted to an attempt to lead my class at high speed first on to Perry's Level 3 and then up to Level 5. However, since I was then still oblivious of Perry's work, I had not spent enough time explaining to them what they might experience (35).

Following this mismatch of expectation and experience, attendance in Earl's classes 'soon dropped off dramatically.' The students' representatives told him that many simply 'could not take all the different names contradicting one another' and had 'decided to spend their time concentrating on other courses where it was clearer what was wanted and where they were supposed to be going.' How did Earl respond to this experience of exodus? Drawing back the students 'took a major effort in terms of supplying handouts summarizing the individuals' key

1 For a similar goal for students, see Salemi and Hansen (2005: 5) and Christensen (1991).

contributions and demonstrating that many of the prime sources that I had been discussing were actually footnoted in their texts' (35-6).

What were some of the lessons learned from the crisis?

> The experience made very clear to me just how desperately my students wanted me to present a bland, finished product to them rather than show them potential building blocks and what use had been made of them; many students simply fled once I started showing them with chapter and verse how their textbook misrepresented or misinterpreted primary contributions. They were unwilling to derive self-confidence from being shown how even famous economists sometimes end up following questionable lines of logic or failing to see the point of what someone else has written (36).

Earl and his students were thus living by different metaphors/analogies: Earl imagined himself as a teacher who was putting up for his students a scaffolding, and leaving them to build within it; and the students had imagined themselves as engaged in an activity resembling that of going to a takeaway restaurant. Earl came to appreciate that from the outset of the course he should carefully guide students' expectations, and that this guidance could include an outline of Perry's scheme of cognitive and ethical development.

The matching of expectations and experience requires attention to the relative images of the relationship between student and teacher. For Earl, teachers are trying to get their students to see them as 'people who have been this way before and can help us to achieve new understandings' rather than as the 'them' who examine 'us' (42). (This effort is a form of White's 'constitution of equality' of people in the classroom.) Earl came to see the importance of taking a metaphoric turn.[2] The metaphorical imagination is needed for communicating relevant parts of unshared experiences or to highlight shared experiences for a higher degree of mutual understanding. Earl writes:

2 The 'metaphoric turn' is the name of an interdisciplinary movement that began in the 1970s. McCloskey (1985) was a leader in the metaphorical turn in economics. On the significance of metaphor in the context of teaching economics, see Arthur (2000).

> Wherever possible, it seems advisable to try to relate the course material to students' existing repertoires of experiences, for ... creative thinking involves resorting to existing elements. ... Teachers should ... try to be alert to things that students say which reveal an ability to think at higher levels than they are presently thinking in economics. They should not be downhearted if they discover that their students are, say, Level 2 thinkers in economics but Level 5 thinkers when they argue amongst themselves about the merits of various sporting teams, consumer durables or artistic works, for the latter can be used as metaphors that might be applied to economics (42-3).

Earl thus sought to remind students in the economics classroom what they already know in other spheres of life and to bridge these spheres. Earl's advice about relating 'course material to students' existing repertoires of experiences' is a form of White's 'integration'. Earl can be read as one who, like White, takes seriously the Delphic motto 'Know thyself'. The 'self' here is not a single unit (like the dominant image of *homo economicus*) but a collection of voices, a place of tension and conversation.

Earl would have teachers remind themselves that their own knowledge is partial and limited, being shaped by their own commitments to particular ideas. These commitments could well be the subject of discussion: 'students may benefit from being taught by economists who are candid about the factors that have led them to make particular commitments' (27). Here we can clearly integrate the personal and the academic:

> So long as lecturers are committed to the idea that it is desirable for students to be exposed to contending perspectives and try to present alternative points of view in ways which 'do unto rival viewpoints as they would like to see the latter's proponents do unto their own', multi-paradigm teaching is compatible with lecturers having made commitments to particular approaches to theorising about particular situations (27).

We can thus be as honest and open as we can about our own commitments. This means deliberately undermining the image of the possibility that a teacher could indeed be a detached and authoritative scientist. We are unable to be impersonal! Who are we to become?

Earl invites us to think seriously about our relations with our students and with our colleagues. Earl holds up the egalitarian Golden Rule – 'do as you would be done by' – as a basic ethical practice. (Earl teaches not just economics but also ethics, and he knows he cannot do otherwise, notwithstanding the patterns of division of labour and disciplines in the academy that suggest otherwise.) Earl is interested in what this rule means not as a matter of conceptual exegesis but as a matter of experience. Translated into language associated with Immanuel Kant, Earl has offered his readers food for thought on what it means to treat a person as an 'end in herself'. Earl creates an egalitarian community by defining both student and colleague as fellow composers of meaning. To do this is to recognize their autonomy and individuality.

This brings us back to our criteria for textual criticism. As a teacher, Earl is to be admired for the way he established a rhetorical equality in the community of which he was part. To repeat, he defines himself and his students as fellow composers of meaning, as fellow questioners. In doing so, he invites a response from his students as whole persons and not simply as automatons, or people who have lost their individuality and who lack potentialities for growth. Earl offers his students not a sterile set of formulae to memorize but an experience that better equips them for coping with the uncertainties and complexities of life. He apparently treats his students with one guiding principle: every student is a potential Plato, and it is the teacher's mission to be her or his Socrates.

At a broad level, we might say that Earl seeks to prepare his students for the pluralistic world in which we live. In this world, we cannot escape the actuality of the multiplicity of different standpoints that continually engage one another over questions of meaning and value. There is no privileged ground upon which to stand, and our talk should reflect this situation. This is not the path to 'mere relativism', where one relinquishes claims of truth. Rather, one's claims of truth are made with humility, as one engages in the discipline of sensing how one's standpoint appears from the standpoint of another, and sensing the limits of one's own position, and being open to the possibility of change in light of genuine conversation. This is a world of equality and integration, as opposed to domination and assimilation.

What can be said about the textual community that Earl establishes? My own experience of reading his story was like that of being spoken to in a rich polyphonic conversation. With a voice that attracts notice by its genuineness, Earl addresses his readers as equals, as colleagues who, like Earl himself are trying to make sense of the complex experiences we all have as teachers, and who want to create better experiences. I have heard it said that great storytellers confront the demands of the complexity of human experience. They are not overcome by the complexity of human experience, and they do not try to evade it. Rather, they have the capacity to come to grips with life's complexity, accepting its challenge and bringing it to judgment for themselves and for others. Such storytellers make significant demands of their listeners. Earl made such demands on his students and on his readers. Included in the 'demands' is an invitation to respond with a story of one's own, to continue a conversation, a process he defines not with propositions but by his own performance.

In concluding this section, let me say some words on its vocabulary. 'Voice' is a keyword. White's *When Words Lose Their Meaning* has been influential in this matter. In the spirit of his English teachers at Amherst College, White invites his readers to vocalize their reading.[3] Training in ear reading helps teach us (if we need to be taught) that all writing has an ethical dimension, for in his (or her) voices any writer defines himself and his audience, and those he speaks about as well. This approach leads us to ask this basic question when we read a text: What kind of relationship does this writer establish with his or her audience? (White 1984: 6) This question, as Earl no doubt appreciates, will be subversive for those who, like many economists, strive to be value-free scientists.

Textbooks

In 2002, I took up a teaching position at the University of Waikato. The textbook for the first-year macroeconomics course – John B. Taylor and Paul Dalziel's *Macroeconomics – New Zealand Edition* (2002) – had

3 Pritchard (1991) offers a helpful outline of the vocal orientation at Amherst College.

been predetermined (all page references that follow are to this text, unless otherwise stated). I offer a critical engagement with this text here; confining myself to the opening chapter to keep the length of this article manageable.

Taylor and Dalziel open their textbook with a story about Jeff Wilson, who they describe as 'an extraordinarily gifted sportsman.' He was the youngest 'double All Black' to play both cricket and rugby for New Zealand. He did not have the time to keep up both activities at an international performance level. Wilson 'had to make a choice.' Here they introduce a keyword in economics, namely scarcity: 'because his time, like that of everyone else, was limited, Wilson had to make a choice – to devote his skills to rugby rather than to cricket' (5). At this point Taylor and Dalziel move from the particular to the general:

> More than anything else, economics is about such choices: whether to go to university or get a job after high school, to take economics or accounting, to invest in one share or another, to take one job or another, to go to work or stay home with children .... Economics is also about how to make good collective decisions as citizens of a community, city or country. Decisions about what sort of taxes should be levied ... and whether citizens of other countries should be allowed to trade freely with and migrate to your country are all informed by economics. Whether you, your best friend, your teacher, the chief executive officer (CEO) of a large firm or even the Prime Minister of New Zealand is making such a decision, the economic principles underlying the decision are the same. Economics helps individuals and societies make choices about the challenges and opportunities they face (5).

Without alerting their readers to their own process of choice, Taylor and Dalziel, who confidently identify themselves as belonging to a group (economists) who have knowledge of value for a universal audience, have taken sides on a burning issue, namely the definition of economics.[4] Those versed in the history of economic thought will know that the movement from 'political economy' to 'economics' was associated with a narrowing of the definition of economics. This narrowing went from

4 On the politics of defining economics, see Hodgson (1996).

something like 'the study of the social relations governing the production, distribution and exchange of wealth' to 'the science of choice'. The former is associated with an image of 'the economy' as not a thing but a process embedded within social institutions; the latter is associated with a 'core' of a 'discipline' in which people are assumed to be 'rational maximizers of their satisfactions', and that the 'principles' of economics are claimed to be deductions from this assumption. The latter definition has formed the basis of 'economic imperialism': economics is the science of choice, and all of life (in all cultures) involves making choices; economics, then, can be applied to all areas of life (Medema 1997).

A less imperialistic and a more humble, reflective economics would make its own culture and language the subject of attention. Taylor and Dalziel would do well to state that their language originates from the practices of a 'capitalist' culture. They then could add, in their now unassuming voice, that much of its plausibility comes from the actuality that its assumptions about human behaviour are in accord with the acquisitive values and calculating rationality of the 'economic' realm of our own culture. By way of setting limits to the scope of their work, they could simply say that they are not going to offer a language with which to think about whether or not to approve of this language and behaviour (White 1990: 74). In doing so, they would be more 'scientific' (in the sense of 'reflective inquiry') in their use of the word 'science' (McCloskey 1994: 56).

Economists, including textbook authors, have to make choices, including the definition of their subject. These choices define the world for us and they reflect and contribute to the kind of economist one is. Taylor and Dalziel have nothing to say on these choices. In their silence on this vital matter, they define their students as dualistic Level 1 thinkers, who only have the task of learning the Right Answers to a basic facts question about the nature of economics. Other textbook authors, such as David Colander (1998) and Frank Stilwell (2002), do have something to say and they invite us to judge for ourselves by asking interpretive and evaluative questions on this topic. In doing so they construct the kind of egalitarian relationship that I have sought to define and commend.

'The purpose' of their book, Taylor and Dalziel say, 'is to introduce you to the field of economics and to help you to understand the economic challenges and opportunities you face as a participant in the world economy' (6). Where is this 'field' on the map of human activities? Are there impermeable fences that separate it from, say, literary criticism? Is the metaphor of the 'field' apt? For Klamer, literary criticism can be of great value for the person who is learning and practicing economics, for she or he, like the literary critic, is a reader of texts. How is a person, whether she or he is an economist, a lawyer, or a theologian, to read well (especially when 'to read' means tuning in to tones, rather than simply seeing solid 'meaning')? White's 'integration' resists the suggestion that the activity of being an economist is located at an entirely different 'field' than that of being a literary critic.

On some generalities of economists' activities, Taylor and Dalziel tell us that 'Economics is a way of thinking.' This 'entails accurately *describing* economic events, *explaining* why the events occur, *predicting* under what circumstances such events may take place in the future and *recommending* appropriate courses of action' (6). What do they mean when they suggest their goal for their reader is 'thinking like an economist'? Who is their reader invited to become? These questions raise others: what, for example, do they mean by 'describing' and 'explaining'? Taylor and Dalziel's silence on these matters, to the extent that it suggests they assume the adequacy of their own language, is part of the process in which they define their reader not as a composer of an experiential meaning but as a taker of an objective meaning. We might imagine their language to be an invisible hand encasing students at Perry's Level 1.

Taylor and Dalziel next take a brief historical turn and talk about the 'foundations of modern economics'. This involves the customary nod to the famous 'classical economist' Adam Smith:

> *Wealth of Nations* ... defined the landscape of economics. Its most revolutionary ideas ... were that people's real incomes would grow through the division of labour, trade and the use of money. ... Smith is frequently associated with the idea that self-interest, rather than benevolence, should be the basis of society. . . . He wrote . . . :

> . . . It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages. [Man is] led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention. Nor is it always the worse for society that it was no part of it. By pursuing his own interest he frequently promotes that of the society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it [Smith (1776; 1994: 485)].
>
> A little more than a century later, Smith's argument was refined by another great economist Alfred Marshall in his book *Principles of Economics* (1890). . . . (6-7).

What does Smith's 'own interest' mean? With what deliberation and tone did he say 'frequently'? What does his 'argument', including his 'invisible hand' metaphor, mean? What did it mean to Smith when he wrote it? To begin to answer this we would do well to read the larger text of Smith's that contains the argument, along with the context in which the *Wealth of Nations* was written. This amounts to a voyage of cultural and historical exploration. For those like Earl who take complexity and discussion seriously, Smith's 'argument' will mean different things to different people, to generate different stories. Taylor and Dalziel invite their reader not to make stories but to receive the supposedly plain meaning in the words. They apparently expect their reader to passively accept Smith's well-worn 'invisible hand' metaphor and thus to thoughtlessly keep it dead. Such an expectation is to expect the reader to keep part of the self, the part that experiences and questions, dead. They invite the reader not to begin cultivating a voice of their own but to parrot the views of the authors (read: the authorities). This is the opposite of White's 'integration'.

'The ideas of *classical* economists', Taylor and Dalziel go on to say, would come to be given 'more precision and logic' through 'mathematical models', making 'economics a more scientific discipline.' This process of mathematization 'established a method of analysis that would come to dominate the practice of economics – namely, *neoclassical economics*, which means "modern-classical" economics' (7). Taylor and Dalziel are about to announce to their reader that the first part of their book aims to introduce 'the principles of neoclassical economics', but before doing so they attempt to justify why they give privileged status to one school of thought.

They first introduce 'five key ideas' that 'neoclassical economics is based on': (1) Opportunity cost; (2) Thinking at the margin; (3) Incentives in individual decision making; (4) The role of markets; (5) Market failure. The discussion on each one is brief. Consider how they introduce the term 'market': 'When you are paid for working at a job . . . you are economically interacting with people. When people make arrangements to interact, economists refer to this process as a **market**' (9). After saying this, they define 'market' by focusing on doing: people interact so as to become 'better off', in terms of 'utility' or of 'profit', through transacting. The authors then present markets as an allocation mechanism: 'For neoclassical economists, this market mechanism is the most efficient way for society to allocate resources' (9). Without attempting to define what they mean by 'efficient', Taylor and Dalziel offer their reader this dualism: 'An alternative method, central planning, was tried in many counties during the twentieth century, but failed' (9). This dualism is unfortunate. If 'the market' is chosen ahead of 'central planning', one may ask, what are the market rules?

Ronald Coase comes immediately to mind here. Coase has observed that the role of markets in modern economic theory is opaque. Markets, he suggests, are institutions, which are fluid processes rather than independent and unchangeable entities. In this regard, he would have us direct our attention to the incompleteness of what he calls 'blackboard economics'. In his Nobel Lecture, Coase wrote:

> It makes little sense for economists to discuss the process of exchange without specifying the institutional setting within which the trading takes place since this affects the incentives to produce and the costs of transacting. I think this is now beginning to be recognised and has been made crystal clear by what is going on in Eastern Europe today. The time has surely gone in which economists could analyse in great detail two individuals exchanging nuts for berries on the edge of the forest and then feel that their analysis of the process of exchange was complete, illuminating though this analysis may be in certain respects. The process of contracting needs to be studied in a real world setting.

> .. We would then learn of the problems that are encountered and how they are overcome, and we would certainly become aware of the richness of the institutional alternatives among which we have to choose (1991: 12).

Coase would sharply appreciate that the simple opposition of 'command versus market' is unnecessarily and misleadingly narrow. Real world markets, as pioneering institutional economist John Commons comprehensively discussed in his *Legal Foundations of Capitalism* (1924),[5] are formed by institutions and are continuously reformed through choices directing the path of institutional evolution. Any agreement to trade says nothing about the legitimacy of the starting point. Concerning the efficiency and equity of alternative markets, rights matter – as the so-called Coase Theorem clarifies, at least in the real world of positive transaction costs.

Taylor and Dalziel ignore an entire micro-institutional foundation of the market, one that directs attention to a fundamental scarcity in the sense of rival patterns of rights. In doing so, they fail to consider a vast set of piercing questions that curious students can be expected to have. 'Can poor countries afford Western-style human rights?', asks institutional economist Allan Schmid (1992: 716), before mentioning that 'the West did not have these rules during its industrialization.' Resembling a teacher inviting movement out of Perry's Level 1, Schmid continues:

> In a socialist system, there is a rule that dictates who pays for the medical care and the lost salary of an injured worker. In a market system, there is either a regulation or a liability rule. Former socialist bureaucrats who are worried about their jobs should have hope – they can all become negligence lawyers. Thus, the issue is not regulation versus the market, but what inputs to production have to be paid for. Who bears the cost of development? (1992: 716).

It will be difficult for a careful reader to come away from these fundamental questions without asking what we point to with the phrase 'a market system'. Schmid, who would have us question what we

5 Dawson (1998) provides an accessible introduction to Commons' unfamiliar language anc image of the economy.

ordinarily take for granted, appreciates that it is not clear how our words relate to the world and that we will do well to contemplate the nature of this relationship. Taylor and Dalziel fail to ask or invite us to attend closely to our core vocabulary, to think about the relationship between our words and the world, about our identity, as economists and as humans.

Taylor and Dalziel avoid basic questions about the language of economics partly through the manner by which they give privileged status to one school of thought. After asserting in a sermon voice that 'many economists believe in the basic ideas of neoclassical economics', Taylor and Dalziel, in a thin voice, turn to 'alternative ideas':

> But alternative ways of viewing how economic life works have been presented. *Post-Keynesian* theorists extend the ideas of John Maynard Keynes to argue that the economy can become dominated by large corporations that take the economy away from equilibrium by marking up prices. *Marxian* economists argue that the capitalist system exploits the labour of workers and that capitalism is inherently unstable and vulnerable to overproduction and unemployment. *Green economics* emphasises the inefficiency of large-scale production units and their potential to create problems such as pollution and environmental damage (9-10).

Let us not concern ourselves with the schools of thought who do not even get a mention, such as the Austrians and the institutionalists. The authors problematically assume that one's basic positions can be stated in a brief collection of words, as a set of propositions, which can be subjected to argument in defense and attack. Taylor and Dalziel do not adopt the egalitarian Golden Rule in their treatment of 'alternative' schools of thought. They fail to invite their reader to make their own sense of what is 'out there' in the 'economic' world. Suffocating the imaginations of their students, they use language as if it is a tool to point to things – with the students implicitly advised to keep their eye on the things and to memorize them. This approach, performing not 'integration' but disintegration, appeals to the part of ourselves that seeks simplicity and authority of an authoritarian kind.

Absent from Taylor and Dalziel's presentation of 'alternative ideas' and of 'neoclassical economics' is a discussion about the concept of 'equilibrium'. The 'economic fluctuations model' that Taylor and Dalziel build their text around focuses on states of equilibrium. Such states were the interest of the founders of 'neoclassical economics', such as Jevons, who had the desire to make economics a 'scientific' discipline, which meant constructing mathematical analyses producing determinate solutions. Numerous 'dissenters' have been critical of the use of the equilibrium metaphor. Concerning the activity of questioning, Warren Samuels has voiced this dissent:

> Use of the equilibrium tool channels both the way in which answers to economists' questions are pursued and the substance of the answers. But the use of the equilibrium tool also channels and thereby limits the questions the economist is likely to ask or the questions that conventional protocol and procedure permit the economist to ask. The unasked questions tend to be those dealing with system and structure, with conflict, with operative factors and forces, and with the substance and operation of the adjustment process. The use of one useful tool for certain questions tends to eclipse, trivialize, and marginalize both other tools and other questions (1997: 81).

The equilibrium metaphor thus has limits of various kinds, and these should be subjects for students to reflect on, lest they have their horizons narrowed with regard to the boundaries of economics and to who is a 'real' economist.[6] For those textbook authors like Colander and Stilwell who have a 'complexity vision', manifest in a focus on emergence and process, the equilibrium metaphor is not pivotal to their story of the 'big picture'.

Taylor and Dalziel present their itinerary for *Macroeconomics* and its justification with these words:

> Part 1 of this book aims to introduce you to the principles of neoclassical economics – not because these ideas about economic life are necessarily the only 'correct' ones, but because they are so widely accepted by people in business, government advisers

6 This vacuum is filled by Dow (1985 and 1990).

> and academic economists. They are the ideas that you will be most likely to encounter as you think about economic problems. As you develop more experience in working with economic ideas and using them to solve problems, you will form your own view about the extent to which you agree with the neoclassical ideas (10).

Taylor and Dalziel's activity of narrating includes *reifying*. They talk about 'ideas' as objects. These ideas are imagined as things that one can 'accept' (or not) and 'encounter'. Ideas are more than the sum of their parts, and our talk about them *should* reflect this. Ideas are experiential processes, and Taylor and Dalziel, contrary to the image of 'experience' they paint, are giving their readers an experience that will be contributing to the process in which a reader will 'form' their 'own view' on 'neoclassical ideas'. Taylor and Dalziel disown any responsibility for what their reader comes to 'own'.

Taylor and Dalziel fail to remark on the considerable diversity of neoclassical economics – a diversity Colander (2003: 151) sees as a reason to declare 'dead' the term 'neoclassical economics'. There are significant difficulties in identifying membership in the divergent factions in the school. Consider the case of Coase, who would have transactions costs become a foundation phenomenon for economics. Where does this place Coase in relation to neoclassical economics?[7] Is he more of an institutional economist? To this one might ask, the 'old' institutional economics or the 'new'? I suspect there would be much disagreement over these questions among my audience. Disagreement can be expected, for, like all cultures, neoclassical economics is diverse and continually changing while continually remaining essentially the same. Our talk about schools should reflect this fluidity. To have such talk as commonplace in textbooks would be desirable, not the least because it would help students understand why economists disagree.

Taylor and Dalziel's talk about the nature of economic models closes off opportunities for understanding disagreement. They direct our attention to the fact that economic models are 'abstractions, or simplifications, of the real world.' 'Do not', they command in their sermon voice, 'be

7 For a response to this question see Medema and Samuels (1997: 108-12).

critical of economic models simply because they are simplifications.' Look at the other 'sciences':

> In every science, models are simplifications of reality. Models are successful if they explain reality reasonably well. If they were not simplifications, then they would be hard to use effectively (15).

Seemingly seeking to stifle any voices of doubt that a student might have with their claim, the authors bring in the map analogy, which is 'employed' by various textbook authors:[8]

> To see a good example of a model, open up your street directory. The aim of the directory is to give you the information you need to find the best way to get where you want to go. To give this information, the map simplifies the real world by making assumptions that certain factors can be ignored; for instance, the street directory assumes that the world is flat, or two-dimensional. While the assumption is totally unrealistic, it makes the map easy to read and does not affect what the street map is trying to do. ... The test of a good model is whether it works, not whether it is realistic. Like any model, the street directory is a good model if it enables you to understand what you want to understand (15).

Where do fledgling macroeconomists want to 'go'? When do we know if a model 'works'? What do we want to 'understand'?

As a number of academics from various backgrounds – from the philosophy of science to poetry – have stressed, every analogy or metaphor has limits.[9] What are the limits of the 'theory as map' analogy? Taylor and Dalziel do not ask this question, and thus offer their readers nothing in the way of tensions about what is being presented in the text. 'How do we know', one of Taylor's and Dalziel's 'subversive' students might well ask, 'when a model is omitting something important (thereby making the results dubious)?

8 For a history and a discussion, see Goldfarb and Griffith (1991).
9 See, for example, Hesse (1996) and Oster (2001).

William Breit's (1984) analogy of 'theory as art' offers an alternative to 'theory as a map'. Focusing on John Kenneth Galbraith and Milton Friedman, Breit asks, 'How can two of the most distinguished social scientists of our time . . . have arrived at such totally conflicting views of economic reality?' This question is not innocent, for he deliberately avoids the more conventional (Perry's Level 1, Dualism) question, 'Is the world out there like the one Friedman describes or is it like the one Galbraith describes?' Breit invites tolerance for and celebration of diversity (Perry's Level 6) in economics this way:

> Art critic John Canaday has shown there is no point saying one painter is more correct in his rendering of the world than another painter. He asks us to look at Vermeer's *The Artist in His Studio* and Picasso's *The Studio*. Which one more correctly depicts an artist's studio. The answer is that both are right relative to a system. A design that is right in Picasso's world is wrong in Vermeer's. There is no rightness or wrongness in art outside of an evolving tradition within a school of art. Both Vermeer and Picasso imposed order on reality and thereby created different versions of reality. . . .
>
> This is what Galbraith and Friedman have done. Like an artist painting on a canvas, Friedman or Galbraith each works within his own traditions and has his own modes and manners of organizing his material. Each offers a new way of seeing, of organizing experience (1984: 23-26).

With such an image of what economists do, Breit implicitly invites us to reframe debates about the issue of realism. The 'real' issue, as Uskali Mäki (1994: 253) has suggested, is not about being realistic versus unrealistic but rather the purposes behind the various kinds and degrees of realism. What is to be included and what is to be excluded and why? This puts the focus on the values and purposes of the analyst.

With an image of economists as artists, we might resist the confident assertion that there is a bright line between the normative and the positive. Taylor and Dalziel introduce this distinction in this way:

> In debating the role of government in the economy, economists distinguish between positive and normative economics. **Positive economics** is about what *is*; **normative economics** is about what

> *should be*. Positive economics endeavours to explain why the Great Depression occurred, for example. Normative economics aims to develop and recommend policies that will prevent another Great Depression (19).

Taylor and Dalziel's dualistic thinking fails to address the putative fact that economists disagree about what *is*, and that one reason for disagreement is the differing normative contexts in the positive texts.

I use the adjective 'putative' partly because, following Kenneth Boulding (1956: 14), 'there are no such things as "facts"', for there are 'only messages filtered through a changeable value system.' Taylor and Dalziel evidently sense the world differently:

> Although economics, like any other science, is based on facts and theories, it is not always used in a purely scientific way.
>
> In political campaigns, economists put arguments forth in favour of one candidate, emphasising the good side of their candidate and de-emphasising the bad side. In a court of law, one economist will help a defendant by arguing in favour of the defendant's case and another economist may help the plaintiff by arguing in favour of the plaintiff's case. In other words, economics is not always used objectively (20).

Taylor and Dalziel say nothing about disagreements about the meaning of 'objectively'. In saying nothing, they themselves are taking sides on a controversial issue without identifying themselves as doing so. A reflective Taylor and Dalziel would have invited their reader to imagine a world that has more complexity than just Black and White, and Good and Bad, Objective and Subjective, and so on.

Taylor and Dalziel are de-emphasising disagreements on basics in economics seemingly in order to put to work their use of 'scientific'. In their concluding section of their introductory chapter Taylor and Dalziel write:

> [T]here is less economic controversy than you may think. Watching economists debate issues on television or reading their opinions in a newspaper or magazine certainly gives the impression that they rarely agree. There are major controversies

> in economics, and we will examine these controversies in this book. But when people survey economists' beliefs, they find a surprising amount of agreement.
>
> Why, then, the popular impression of disagreement? Because there are many economists, and one can always find some economist with a different viewpoint. When people sue other people in court, and economics is an issue, it is always possible to find economists who will testify on each side, even if 99 per cent of economists would disagree with one side. Similarly, television interviews or news shows want to give both sides of public policy issued. Thus, even if 99 percent of economists agree with one side, it is possible to find at least one on the other side (21).

But why is it 'possible to find economists who will testify on each side'? Why is there such disagreement? In a legal case, numbers alone for and against an issue do not determine outcomes. Reasoning matters, and if 'due process of law' is to mean anything, the hearing should treat each story with equal respect. One of my first lessons at law school was this: there are at least two sides to every argument and case. On one side, certain analogies are invoked, whilst different analogies are invoked on another side. The judiciary must choose between rival analogies, and we can generally expect one or more judges to dissent. Taylor and Dalziel would do well to learn this lesson in institutionalized polyphony and to apply it to economics, not the least because it might help stem the monophonic economic imperialism.

Quite unlike Earl, Taylor and Dalziel simply avoid the basic controversies in economics. They ignore surveys of economists' beliefs that 'find' a surprising amount of disagreement.[10] In the process of thinking about some general closing remarks on Taylor and Dalziel's text, a review of Klamer's essay examining the first chapters of the twelve editions of Samuelson's economics textbook came to mind:

> Samuelson's rhetoric in his first chapters, Klamer shows us, is skillfully crafted to establish his authority and to convince students of the *definiteness* of economic knowledge. The presentation is more intimidating than empowering: the student is not enabled to pursue economic investigation on her own, nor is

10 See Samuels (1980).

> she presented with (in Kuhn's words) "a number of competing . . . solutions to [economic] problems" that she must evaluate for herself. This surely helps to explain why so many of our students, having endured the introductory course, refuse to pursue the study of economics further; those of us who teach should ask ourselves whether this is the sort of pedagogy we really wish to be practicing (1990: 160).

We should praise teachers and textbooks that introduce students to conflicting theoretical and methodological views. Such teachers and textbooks empower students by giving them genuine choices, including, for example, materials for determining what might make them a good economist. We as teachers should give students a sense that the life of the economist somehow involves everything, including politics, ethics, sociology, and theology. Students, to conclude a paragraph that might well sound to you like a mini-sermon, should be gifted the freedom to follow their own inquisitiveness and questioning and to work out in their imagination various possibilities not just for 'the economy' but also for themselves.

Taylor and Dalziel talk about the 'freedom' of the individual, but they do not seem to sense that they themselves are engaged in a relation with their reader in which freedom is itself an issue. They 'offer' a language that they suggest no 'rational' person can doubt. To accept this language, as with any language that makes universal claims, is not to be free but to be indoctrinated and disintegrated. I have written this essay out of a will to resist this relation of inequality, and I hope I have offered the reader a resource with which to do the same, in her or his own way.

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