ABSTRACTS

C5.1 Philosophy of the Humanities and the Social Sciences
C6. Philosophy of the Applied Sciences and Technology

Philosophical Problems of Information and Network Societies
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“Progress of Cognition in Network Society”. The report provides a philosophical analysis of network society from the position of constructivism theory. It is proved that the conception of a person as a constructor of the real world can be considered like basis of this type of the society. It’s advanced the idea that the network society should be explored as a qualitatively new sphere of a man’s creative and constructive activity. According to the conception of network society, the author makes a conclusion that the process of cognition in it has a universal character. While communicating, representatives of different branches of knowledge draw up norms and standards accepted by the whole scientific society involved in the process. Emerging “virtual reality” is pointed out as the main disadvantage. The reason is that even today, when we live in network society to a large degree, it’s possible to state that social networks and virtual reality brought with new modern technologies lead to man’s egocentrism, because he begins concentrating on his personality and thoughts more and more losing the connection with real world. Eventually, we can see that nowadays gender relations also acquire virtual character more and more as it becomes enough to switch on your computer, surf the Internet and find any sexual partner you like. Man can introduce himself as a monster or a super guy and it doesn’t matter what he is in the reality. That’s why spatial ideas of physical borders of communication and identification are being changed. The reason is man’s presence in the communication environment being cognized as virtual and real simultaneously, but it’s an absolutely new phenomenon of human existence.

What explains economics imperialism?
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‘Economics imperialism’ denotes the spread of rational choice modelling to political science and sociology, as well as the explicitly economic-style modelling of non-economic phenomena such as that pioneered by Gary Becker and others. What explains it?

I propose the following answer: it is because the core of economic theory, i.e. rational choice theory, is domain- general. In particular, the formalism of rational choice theory does not explicitly refer to economic phenomena at all. An ‘agent’ may maximize under ‘constraints’ its ‘utility function’ with regard to anything, be it military victory, social prestige or electoral gain, not just economic matters. Accordingly, rational choice theory is easily exportable to any domain that features agents making choices – which means, in addition to economics, most of the rest of social science, as well as many parts of biology and even political philosophy.
But the same is not true the other way round. Central theoretical approaches in sociology, for instance, such as functionalism or conflict theory, are specific to the sociological domain. Analogous remarks apply to political science and anthropology too. Accordingly, exporting their theories in the reverse direction – i.e. to rather than from economics – is much harder and indeed has not happened.

I relate this analysis to three other explanations of economics imperialism. I argue that two of these – the prestige earned by economic theory’s (relative) mathematical sophistication, and the appeal of methodological individualism – are in fact respectively a consequence of and dependent on economic theory’s domain- generality. A third rival explanation has been suggested by economists themselves: economics has had imperial success because, unlike other social sciences, it generates empirical hypotheses testable by standard statistical techniques, and because it focuses on economic efficiency (Samuelson, Lazear, Becker). I argue that this third explanation is implausible.

How and Why Models Are Not Experiments – Epistemological Trouble in Economic Science
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Abstract: In my report, I will perform an epistemological analysis of thought experiments. I will consider the historical background of this research tool, its specificity, distinctive features of its functioning either in the system of natural sciences and in the economic theory. I analyse the nature of the relationship between a material experimentation and a thought experiment and the status of results of each of these procedures to acquire new knowledge. I claim that thought experiments in the economic theory and in natural sciences are fundamentally different and that the isolated thought experiment is not a full value research tool for investigating the reality but a good means for mapping and structuring the subject area. See attached file for full text submission.