ABSTRACTS

The future – and present – of work and its rules facing technological transformations
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Technological transformations have been leading to deep changes in the world of work. These changes concern organization and production modalities. Such changes are mostly intended to significantly transform the concept of work itself and the relationship between man and work. It is therefore interesting, in a sociological-juridical perspective, to evaluate how technological transformations put pre-existing social and normative concepts to the test. From a logical-juridical point of view, the efficacy of regulation itself and its material topicality are called into question.

The focus will be put on the role of work as a central and value element in the social organization. This role risks slipping into deep crisis, in view of a progressive separation between the tension in several economic sectors to create profits and the necessity to keep good occupational levels: practically, economies of scale are currently facing an asymmetrical increase in reached production levels and employed workforce. It is therefore necessary to evaluate how complex phenomena, such as technological unemployment – according to its Keynesian definition, “unemployment due to our discovery of means of economizing the use of labor outrunning the pace at which we can find new uses for labor” –, new professional identities and new ways of work organization, impact the system of juridical and social regulation.

A diachronic observation of production dynamics, the reformulation of entire industrial sectors, and paths through which the digital world has transformed the exchange of goods and services, will be correlated with the socio-normative context and with the role of work with respect to juridical ecosystems. The conclusive question, partly open, is whether technological transformations impose – more or less gradually, through the legislator intervention – active juridical transformations as well, or, conversely, determine a passive transformation already in operation.

To what extent economic explanations are distinctively mathematical?
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Some philosophers argue that many explanations in science are distinctively mathematical (e.g., Lange 2013). They do their work quite similarly like symmetry principles do in explaining: by limiting the set of events that could emerge. Or, in Lange's terms, they explain by appealing to mathematical necessity. Also, they can do their job while not using laws of nature as well as they can explain without citing causes of explanandum. Thus it is worth checking whether distinctively mathematical explanations are present in special sciences, including economics. The goal of my paper is to check to what extent economic explanations are distinctively mathematical. In doing so I am to focus also on the problem of distinguishing distinctively mathematical explanations from non-causal explanations referring to some mathematical facts. Since economics is to a large extent a modelling science (Morgan 2012), I will check how distinctively mathematical explanations do their work in economic models. The rationale for focusing on models, abstract entities isolating some aspects of their targets, in investigating the role of distinctively mathematical explanations comes from the fact that what makes these explanations non-causal is that they “ignore (and requires that one ignores) various physical details about the system of interest and appeals to a particular abstract structure of the physical system” (Batterman 2010, 3). So, one may find similarities in modelling economic phenomena and explaining them using distinctively mathematical explanations. Such explanations provide us with understanding of economic phenomena if appealing to laws and causal structure of the world is impossible.

References:


Appreciation Problems of Neuroeconomics

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Neuroeconomics is a new sub-discipline of economics. Its subject matter is the neuronal foundations of economic behavior. Many standard economists are critical of neuroeconomics; they doubt, partly in principle, that neuroeconomics is capable of contributing to the progress of economics proper. I will try to reconstruct and make plausible the main
arguments of standard economists against neuroeconomics, mainly in positive economics. One argument claims that neuroeconomics is necessarily irrelevant to standard economics because of conceptually diverging goals of these two disciplines. Another argument claims that neuroeconomics is irrelevant to standard economics for empirical reasons. Given these reservations of standard economists, I shall formulate five recommendations to neuroeconomists. First, neuroeconomists should realize that in standard microeconomics, predictions have a much higher status than causal explanations whereas in the neurosciences the reverse is true. Second, neuroeconomists should become clear whether they want to positively contribute to, or criticize and/or change, or simply don’t care about standard economics. For these alternatives, different strategies are advisable. Third, if neuroeconomists want to positively contribute to standard economics, they should realize that their work may often be devaluated as merely heuristic if their results can be reproduced by methods of standard economics. In addition, neuroeconomics does often not contribute to standard or behavioral economics but rather exploits their results for neuroscientific purposes without any benefit for economics proper. Fourth, if neuroeconomists want to criticize and/or change standard economics, they should use the same strategies that behavioral economists successfully used in the preceding decades for the same purpose. Fifth, neuroeconomists who do not care about their influence upon standard economics can still gain high academic recognition. In summary, neuroeconomics can gain greater appreciation within standard economics only if it can produce novel predictions of interesting economic behavior.

Dealing with plurality in scientific practice: The case of International Political Economy
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Scientific pluralism, a normative endorsement of the plurality or multiplicity of research approaches in science, has recently been advocated by philosophers (e.g., Chang, Longino, Mitchell, Waters and Wylie) as well as social scientists. Comparing these accounts of scientific pluralism, one will encounter quite some variation. First, we want to clarify the variety of philosophical versions of scientific pluralism by showing how they incarnate different models of democracy (e.g., aggregative, deliberative, participatory, agonistic or antagonistic) – stipulating the desired social-epistemic interaction among the plurality of research approaches in different ways. Second, we analyze the recent debate about the desired interaction among the plurality of research approaches, or ‘schools’, in the discipline of International Political Economy (IPE). This debate was triggered by a paper of Benjamin Cohen (2007) in which he presents a way of slicing up the field of IPE in different schools as well as a proposal for its future development. The many reactions this paper provoked provide us with a clear insight into how scientific pluralism is understood by social scientists and how to implement it (see, e.g., the collection of papers in Phillips and Weaver (2011) and the 20th anniversary issue of the Review of International Political Economy (2013); also see Sil and Katzenstein’s (2010) account of analytic eclecticism). Scrutinizing this debate will clarify what social scientists themselves consider to be the ideal interaction among the multiplicity of research approaches (schools, theories, models, …). Further, the confrontation with the different philosophical accounts of scientific pluralism discussed in the first part of the paper enables us to make the social scientists’ accounts more explicit as well as evaluate and refine the strengths and weaknesses of the philosophical accounts – helping us to spell out more carefully how different research approaches interact in the most productive way possible.