

« Walras—Neoclassical? »

On Walrasian Historiography

13-14 September 2019

The work of Léon Walras is generally associated with the marginalist revolution, and therefore with the neoclassical tradition in economics. But does this make of Walras a neoclassical economist?

The historiography of economic thought of the last decades has made this connection far less straightforward. More than 45 years after the questioning of the narrative of the marginalist revolution (Collison Black, Coats and Goodwin 1973), and more than 40 years after Jaffé begun “de-homogenizing” the contributions of Menger, Jevons and Walras (Jaffé 1976), where do we stand on the question whether Walras was an ancestor of neoclassical economists? To make matters worse, the very existence of a neoclassical school has been recently questioned (Lawson 2013). It is therefore legitimate to ask what is left of this relation between Walras and the neoclassical tradition.

The different marginalist traditions themselves have been progressively de-homogenized: Walras has been distinguished from the other members of the Lausanne School, especially, but not only, Pareto; Menger from his followers; the ambiguities in the relations between Jevons, Marshall and the other English marginalists have been explored; and this even before we get on to the other marginalist traditions: Swedish, American, Italian, Russian, etc.

This 10th Conference of the *International Walras Association* invites the submission of proposals for contributions that question the nature of the relations between Walras, the marginalist revolution and neoclassical economics, or that re-examine the meaning of these different terms. Is it still possible to have a coherent discourse on this subject?

More generally, it seems useful to reconstruct Walras’s place in the history of economic thought: to re-evaluate Walras’s complex relationships with his contemporaries (Pareto, Proudhon, Marx, the liberals of his time) and to examine what the theories associated with Walras’s legacy have in common with other economic theories (Marxism, Barone, economic theories of socialism, Lange, Hayek, Leontief...). Finally, it seems important to reconsider Walras’s place within contemporary economic theories, focusing on the uses and references that some of these theories are still making to Walrasian ideas, and on the harsh criticism they frequently evoke.

Contributions focusing on other aspects of Walras’s work and legacy are also welcome, as well as (for the purpose of comparison) interventions on other marginalist traditions, such as the Lausanne, Austrian or English ones (discussing for example questions like: “Menger—Neoclassical?” or “Jevons—Neoclassical?”).

The 10th Conference of the International Walras Association will take place on **September 2019, Friday 13th and Saturday 14th September**, at the **University of Lausanne**; it will be organized by the *Centre Walras-Pareto d'études interdisciplinaires de la pensée économique et politique*, under the auspices of the International Walras Association.

Anyone interested should send an abstract of approximately 300 words (in English or in French), until **March 15, 2019**, to the vice-president of the International Walras Association, **francois.allisson@unil.ch**, in PDF format (with the title of the contribution, the abstract, the name of the author(s), and an e-mail address). The choice of papers will be announced in April 2019.

The text accompanying the communication should be sent until August 31, 2019. As they arrive, they will be made available on the association website (<http://wp.unil.ch/walras>), with a cover page indicating the status of the contribution (a Working Paper for the conference).

A selection of contributions will be proposed for a special issue of the journal ***Economia – History | Methodology | Philosophy***, coordinated by François Allisson, Roberto Baranzini, Annie L. Cot and Jérôme Lallement. To this end, conference participants whose contribution will be selected **commit themselves** to submit a final—improved—version of their paper to the journal, for December 31, 2019, at the latest. ***Economia*** publishes papers in English or in French.

References

- Collison Black, R. D., A. W. Coats, and C. D. Goodwin (eds). 1973. *The Marginal Revolution in Economics*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press. HOPE Supplementary Volume.
- Jaffé, W. 1976. “Menger, Jevons and Walras de-homogenized”. *Economic Inquiry*, 14(4): 511–524.
- Lawson, T. 2013. “What is this ‘school’ called neoclassical economics?”, *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 37: 947–983.

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