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JHET INTERVIEWS SERIES: AN EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

BY
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We historians of economics do not often research our own field or our leading scholars. To be sure, we discuss, and have been discussing for several decades now, how to write the history of economics (cf. Düppe and Weintraub 2018) and what has been the relationship between economics and our field, and the historiographical methods recently available (cf. Düppe and Weintraub 2019). But we do so in ahistorical terms, as Roy Weintraub (2007a, p. 268) already argued. We also engage in different initiatives that have some bearing on reflections on our field and individual scholars, which does not necessarily mean that they make a specifically historical contribution. One of those initiatives is our participation either in Festschrifts or in symposiums or posthumous homages for notable historians of economics. See, for instance, the recent volume on Mark Blaug edited by Marcel Boumans and Matthias Klaes in 2013; the symposium on William Barber co-edited by Mauro Boianovsky and Robert Dimand, published in the September 2019 issue of this journal; or the symposium on Mary Morgan co-organized by Boumans and Hsiang-Ke Chao, published in 2018. Another initiative is having historians of economics featured in encyclopedias, such as the few entries in *The New Palgrave Dictionary of Economics*.[1]

Less commonly, some of our colleagues appear in interviews published in academic outlets: take Ingrid Rima's interview opening the book of conversations with women economists in the United States (Olson and Emami 2002), or Weintraub's interview in a book with a group of economists from different universities (Bowmaker 2012), or yet Esther-Mirjam Sent being interviewed in a set of conversations with heterodox economists (Mearman et al. 2019). There are also Robert Denis Collison Black's and David Laidler's interviews opening their Festschrifts (Murphy and Prendergast 2000;

We thank John Davis, Robert Dimand, Harald Hagemann, Wade Hands, Maria Cristina Marcuzzo, Steven Medema, and E. Roy Weintraub for their critical reactions to an earlier draft of this introduction. As usual, they are not responsible for the final outcome. We tried in this introduction to be fairly exhaustive in researching what was published in English and is listed here. Undoubtedly we may have missed things, and apologize if that is the case.

[1]In the *New Palgrave* readers can find entries on Martin Bronfenbrenner, Joseph Dorfman, Frank W. Fetter, Robert L. Heilbroner, Terence W. Hutchison, William Jaffé, Joseph Schumpeter, Edwin R. A. Seligman, Joseph Spengler, Henry Spiegel, Piero Sraffa (as editor of David Ricardo), and Jacob Viner, not to speak of Don Patinkin, Lionel Robbins, and George Stigler, among other Distinguished Fellows of the History of Economics Society.

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Leeson 2010) and an earlier interview with Laidler (Rühl and Laidler 1998); A. W. "Bob" Coats's interview in his collected papers (Coats 2014); Wade Hands's 2013 interview (Hands 2013); Tom Humphrey's and Bruce Caldwell's interviews for the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond (Broaddus and Humphrey 2004; Caldwell 2010); John Davis's 2018 interview (Morgan 2018); and a few interviews with historians in the *Erasmus Journal for Philosophy and Economics*: John Davis in 2012 (vol. 5, no. 2), Margaret Schabas in 2013 (vol. 6, no. 2), and Gilbert Faccarello in 2014 (vol. 7, no. 1). Philip Mirowski is an outlier here, having been interviewed for academic journals several times (Heinonen 1993; Mirowski 2005, 2019; Pilkington 2013; Lash and Dragos 2016).[2] Nonetheless, it is telling that most of such interviews were not produced by historians of economics and were not framed eminently with historiographical concerns.

Although the historical analysis of the evolution of our field and its actors is not a very common genre among us, there are notable exceptions. In 1983 Warren Samuels published the collection *The Craft of the Historian of Economic Thought*, which was the first volume of the newly created series *Research in the History of Economic Thought and Methodology*. In this edited volume Samuels invited scholars to discuss the work of eighteen leading historians of economics. Steve Medema and Samuels (2001) did a new round of such an exercise, with another eighteen analyses of a new set of historians of economics.[3] A few sociological and historical elements that help us historicize the evolution of our field are offered in some chapters of the *History of Political Economy* (*HOPE*) supplement edited by Weintraub (2002). An historical approach to our field of expertise was offered by Craufurd Goodwin (2008), by Roger Backhouse and Philippe Fontaine (2014), by Donald Winch's personal account (Winch 2017), by Yann Giraud (2019) through the articles published in the journal *HOPE*, and by Fontaine (2016), who surveyed the history of economics produced by outsiders of our discipline. In his turn, Weintraub (2007a) historicized the relationship between our field and economics in the United States. Quantitative studies of history of economics articles include those of Maria Cristina Marcuzzo (2008), Pedro Duarte and Giraud (2016), Marcuzzo and Giulia Zacchia (2016), and the forthcoming survey of the fiftieth anniversary of *HOPE* by José Edwards.

With the building of the new website of the History of Economics Society (HES) and the new tools of the digital world we live in, it became apparent that the construction of disciplinary history and memory has its own turns, not always evident. For instance, until 1990, HES used to publish the citations of its Distinguished Fellows in the *History of Economics Society Bulletin*, the society's preceding publication that existed from 1979 to 1989, when it became *JHET*.[4] After the creation of the journal, it was decided not to publish these citations any more. In the digital era, making the

[2]One might add also the autobiographical pieces written by some historians, which include those of Blaug, Geoffrey Harcourt, and Mark Perlman in Szenberg and Ramrattan (2004).

[3]In addition, there are works on particular individuals as historians of economics, such as Paolo Sylos Labini (Porta 2007), Paul Samuelson (Mirowski 2013; Medema and Waterman 2014, Introduction), Joseph Schumpeter (Moss 1996), Piero Sraffa (Trezzini 2018), George Stigler (Freedman 2007), and Jacob Viner (Groenewegen 1994).

[4]The citations were usually accompanied with the Fellow's picture. A few remarks by the Fellow, after the text of the citation, were also published.

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citations public and archiving them can be done on the society's website. The website hosts practical information about the HES and also historical material of its initiatives. It could also be used to contribute to our own institutional memory, inviting us to think more systematically about the purposes and historiographical strategies that open up with the organization of this kind of materials.

Moreover, none of the main journals of our field has ever published an interview with fellow historians of economics. With the spread of cheaper recording and video technologies, and the rise of blogs and social media, a few historians of economics ventured to produce some interviews or biographic documentaries, such as the oral history project at Wesleyan University with an interview of William Barber (Smith 2013, 2014), Harro Maas and Tiago Mata's interview of Craufurd Goodwin (also featuring Weintraub and Neil De Marchi), and Ugo Adilardi, Carlo Massa, Manuela Mosca, and Emanuele Redondi's documentary on Antonio de Viti de Marco, the leading Italian economist working on public finance.[5] Andrej Svorenčík and Maas made a huge effort in producing a witness seminar on the making of experimental economics, an initiative even more challenging historiographically (see Svorenčík and Maas 2016; Maas 2018, 2019). Recently, historians are more present in the digital world through interviews featured in podcasts (the two currently conducted by historians of economics are "Smith and Marx Walk into a Bar: A History of Economics Podcast" and "Ceteris Never Paribus: The History of Economic Thought Podcast"), and in short videos of *JHET* authors talking about their published papers, used in the journal's social media.[6] But nothing is close to oral history initiatives with historians of economics, similar to the Oral History Collections at the Science History Institute or "Conversations with History" of the UC-Berkeley Institute of International Studies.[7]

This lack of oral history and a disciplinary memory of our own field seems an appropriate working front in view of the fiftieth anniversary of the formal establishment of the HES to be celebrated in 2024, or the twenty-fifth anniversary of the European Society for the History of Economic Thought in 2021. Although interviews and autobiographical materials are not straightforward historical documents, but self-interested narratives of economists, interviewed by their peers and published in journals competing for prestige, as Weintraub (2005, 2007b, 2010) forcefully argued, they can serve "as one component of a richer and more deeply layered and contextualized account of the individual's life and work" (Weintraub 2010, p. 782) and foster further historical research on the building of the HES. This is why we would like to introduce a new section in the society's journal: interviews with its distinguished

[5]Links to the video interview of Goodwin and De Viti de Marco's documentary are found in the "Online Resources" page of the HES website (https://historyofeconomics.org/resources/online-resources/; under "Media" and then "Videos"; accessed July 21, 2019). There is also a short (five-minute) 2012 video interview with Donald Winch done by the Institute of Intellectual History at the University of St. Andrews, which is available at https://vimeo.com/57358829 (accessed July 23, 2019).

[6]The podcasts are available at: https://hetpodcast.libsyn.com and https://ceterisneverparibus.net (accessed July 23, 2019). The *JHET* video series, *Meet JHET Authors*, is available at the HES Youtube channel: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCHepUipTlWsRTMLlSuLXz6A.

[7]Their websites are: https://www.sciencehistory.org/oral-history-collections and https://conversations.berkeley.edu/index.php/. The Oral History Association (OHA) has a list of web guides to doing oral history available at: https://www.oralhistory.org/web-guides-to-doing-oral-history/ (accessed July 23, 2019).

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members. Of course, interviews are not the only way of building a disciplinary memory, and they involve very complex historiographical issues, as Dorian Jullien (2018, 2019) discussed, and those related to life writing as analyzed by Weintraub and Evelyn Forget (2007). After all, if "[i]ndividuals express their lives in science, and their science is an expression of their lives" (Weintraub and Forget 2007, p. 1), matters compound with historians expressing their lives in the history of science.

Nonetheless, we have very few personal accounts of and reflections on the development of our community that provide materials that might begin to contribute to an historical approach to the matter. As a result, we are launching what we hope will be a long-standing series of interviews to be featured sparsely in *JHET* over the coming years, as they become available to us. We decided that we would start by interviewing past presidents of HES and Distinguished Fellows. So we invited fellow historians to conduct interviews without heavy guidance: we have not standardized the question format, and we have invited historians who would be knowledgeable about the interviewees and their works, emphasizing openness as producing information effectively. We asked only that a reflection about our field and our society be part of the interview. We also have not predefined the format of the interview, whether it would be by correspondence or face-to-face, whether questions would be sent in advance, and the myriad of methodological issues. We respected the constraints that the location of each interviewee presented to us, and let the historian interviewer ponder on those issues. We suggested only the recording (in audio or video) of the interview in the event of a face-to-face meeting, for the sake of making this publicly available as well. We are most grateful to all colleagues who have accepted to conduct these interviews and to all interviewees who spared time to share their memories with us. We are proud to see the first interview appearing in the pages of *JHET* and we hope our readers will enjoy this and the coming ones. Any suggestions and willingness to collaborate are much appreciated, so please contact us.

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