

Introduction

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The topic of Economics and Art Theory, that this volume intends to make a contribution to, appears at the same time to be both extremely wide in what it can encompass and quite narrow in what overlap may exist between these two distinct fields of thought and knowledge. The contribution of this volume is to instigate new avenues of dialogue and research between economics, the humanities and art by discussing fundamental questions on the nature of social reality and the ways we can go about investigating it.

Until now, the primary interest of economists in art has been to examine the valuation of artistic output, and a description of that market and labour processes.¹ As a consequence, there is a large literature on the economics of art, performance and other related products seen from the perspective of how these particular markets function. Related to this is the literature of Culture Economics that mediates the ground between the valuation of cultural goods and how cultural elements shape the nature of the economy. In this literature, culture is seen as a way to understand differences in economic outcomes. As Fernandes asks in the “Culture and Economics” entry of the *New Palgrave Dictionary of Economics*, “does culture matter, and if so, how much?” (Fernandes 2008: 1), a question that summarises in an efficient manner the viewpoint of this literature.²

Closer, however, to the subject matter of this volume is the interface of economics with literary theory. In this field, there have been substantial and innovative approaches that discuss various aspects of the interrelation of economics with literary forms, and more broadly the nature of narratives and how they are created. A landmark volume that investigates the intersection of literature and economics was edited by Woodmansee and Osteen (1999) that brought together contributions from economists, literary and cultural historians and showed how fertile the ground of this exchange can be.³ A more recent contribution edited by Seybold and Chihara (2018) includes topics like rhetorics and economics; poetry in the great depression and economics in literature and novels. The focus on economics in novels is further explored by Akdere and Baron (2018) who investigate how economic ideas and metaphors shape literary texts. Furthermore, Morson and Schapiro (2017) make an impassioned argument for the use of literature to humanise, again, economics. They note that Adam Smith merged historical and analytical understandings and was not only an analytical thinker but also a moralist. This is also a prescriptive statement on how economics should be re-oriented in

the future. Finally, Richard Bronk's *The Romantic Economist* is an important milestone in the relation between economics and the romantic literature. He writes:

Romanticism is a loose collection of philosophical beliefs and artistic creeds which celebrate the role of imagination, creativity and emotion, while being generally skeptical of the ability of scientific reason to provide a coherent set of universally applicable answers to human problems. Economics is a self-styled 'social science', proud of its mathematical modelling and dedicated to the analysis and prediction of market behaviour of rational agents seeking to optimize their wealth or utility. To many, Romanticism and economics seem to be quintessential polar opposites, perfect embodiments of C.P. Snow's 'two cultures', separated by a 'gulf of mutual incomprehension.'

(Bronk 2009: 1)

Nevertheless, Bronk argues for a new approach in which romantic sensibilities are not an alien but a constituent feature of the economists' mindset.

This volume has similar considerations as its starting point but intends to broaden the discussion by opening up an interdisciplinary dialogue between economics and a variety of perspectives from the humanities that include art and architecture together with literary studies. The intention is not to see the output of these fields as commodities and explore, for instance, the particularities of art market process, but instead as methods and languages of thought and knowledge creation, interpretations that can reveal novel insights about the economy and the way economists conceptualise their social reality. At the core of this dialogue is an understanding that these viewpoints share, to some degree, a common purpose, which is to shed light on the human condition and its social reality.

At a more reflective level, one of the aims of this edited volume is to explore how the humanities theorise about themselves and economics, and how this can relate and inform the way we understand both areas of study. In essence, what all contributors aim to illuminate is how the theoretical armoury of one discipline can inform the other and create categories that explore anew themes and concepts from a different vantagepoint. The novelty of this approach is the effort to tackle the relation of the humanities and arts with economics both from a theoretical and practical standpoint. In order to do so, all contributing chapters attempt to shed light on topics that appear disparate but share deep selective

affinities. This attempt comes as a response to pressing needs, to view old problems in new frameworks that build interdisciplinary bridges.

It could be argued that the core considerations we are returning to in this volume are anything but new. Questions on the nature of art can be traced to the literature of Ancient Greece and Rome. In more recent eras, and more specifically, in modernity, we can trace part of these concerns to the Age of Reason. In his seminal Enlightenment work, *Laocoön*, Gotthold Lessing wrote about the strengths of the arts in representing different aspects of reality each with its own remit. He writes that "...Painting, in its imitations, makes use of entirely different means and signs from those which Poetry employs; the former employing figures and colours in space, the latter articulate sounds in time" (Lessing 1874: 149). For Lessing, this separation is essential as it sets limits to the ability of each art to imitate nature. He notes approvingly this distinction which he finds in the ancient writers noting that "Arts differed, as well in the object as the manner of their imitation" (Lessing 1874: 3). For Lessing, this is essential for the artist to convey naturally true sentiment to their audience. His whole treatise is about the distinction between conveying *Laocoön's* suffering in poetical form or in sculptural depiction and the aesthetic criteria guiding each art. He notes that the screams a poet writes on paper the sculptor must "soften into signs" (Lessing 1874: 19). And thus, the same feeling is expressed through different forms if the artist intends (as they should according to Lessing) to capture the beauty of the natural world.

In this way, Lessing created the groundwork both for renewing the link between the perception of reality and representation and for distinguishing the domain of the different arts in what they can faithfully capture. The central core of this programmatic vision is the link between ancient and modern aesthetics in their interest in realistic representation through an improvement of the theory and practice of imitation. Implicit in this viewpoint is the belief that there is an optimum division between disciplines with remits that would achieve the best result in this singular quest for the representation of reality.

In contrast, the Romantics, and in particular the work of August Schlegel, distinguished between ancient and modern aesthetics, by both problematising the very nature of representation in art and, as a consequence, the distinct separation of fields of art. Schlegel is chiefly remembered today as a central figure of the German Romantic movement. He argued that modern art relates to the environment that arose within specific historical conditions and, as a result, requires a completely new framework of understanding. Art cannot be seen to mimic nature, an aspiration of ancient art that was re-affirmed during the Enlightenment and is the basis of neoclassical aesthetics. For Schlegel, art could

not be a mere “imitation” or “representation” of nature; it is the product of a creative force and, therefore, of expression. Thus, he writes “but in the fine arts mere imitation is always fruitless; even what we borrow from others to assume a true poetical shape, must, as it were, be born again within us” (Schlegel 1861: 19).

At the core of this debate between Lessing and Schlegel are the contesting definitions of art. Lessing sees the different types of art as compartments, each with its strengths and limits in capturing and representing particular aspects of reality. For example, statues are good as capturing something at rest. Poetry is good at telling us of something in motion. Each can do specific things which determine it as a field, what it can represent and its limits. In contrast, for Schlegel, art does not anymore mimic reality but, instead, is an expression of modern concerns, aspirations and thought patterns. In this respect, what fields of knowledge or expression fall within the label of “the arts” or “art” differs depending on how you define the term – Lessing and Schlegel would see it very differently. For Schlegel, it is not only sculpture, architecture and painting, but it also extends to encompass literature which is an act of expression.

Therefore, our initial interest in the subject emerged while examining the various methods the arts and economics use in their respective fields and the way they define their remit. If art essentially relates to the world as something that can be moulded, shaped and transformed, then it is nothing more than a mode of expression, a state of mind. Can, then, economics – with all its devices and other trappings – be itself considered as an art? According to some of its practitioners, economics appears to be a rational, enlightenment-inspired machine to uncover our social and economic nature. Economic theory has been described as representing, predicting, abstracting, imagining, mimicking and simplifying reality in its effort to define its method of investigation. Also, economic theory is not monolithic and different traditions that emanate from different eras and strands within the discipline come up with a range of answers on the relation between economic theory and reality. Perhaps, one result of this plurality may be to see economic theory as a romantic reengineering of our society, its values and its processes. This leads us to the following question: How does art and economics mediate this difficult relation between reality, representation and expression?

What all contributions attempt to address is not only the way we see artistic production and economic analysis but also the very nature of reality and the reasons we ascribe to expression. These two different conceptions of art, by Schlegel and Lessing, define an important dialogue of beliefs on the view of reality. It is important to consider the questions that this fundamental dialogue unearths not only in relation to art and economics but also on the very nature of representation and understanding that are the subject matter of disciplines across the humanities and the social sciences. This kind of ontological and methodological questions constitute the point of investigation of this volume.

The different chapters attempt to add to this discussion through diverse tools of investigation, that the contributors bring from their disciplinary backgrounds. To aid the reader, the volume is organised in three parts titled: Economics, Literature and Representation (Part I), Economics, Visual Arts and Abstractions (Part 2) and Reflections on Economics, Society and Art (Part 3).

The first part explores the intersection of economics and literary studies through the prism of representation. The idea that our world can be captured through simplified representations is one of the core recurring tropes of economic analysis. As Claire Pignol notes in the first chapter:

the various economic thoughts may be characterized by two features: (i) the will to explain the mechanisms at work in the social world, mechanisms which allows to understand an economic order as an equilibrium of forces, whatever those forces are based on natural laws or historical and institutional contexts and, lead spontaneously or not to an efficient and or satisfying order; (ii) the will to advise the Prince in order to transform the social world and avoid disorder and misfortune.

(Pignol 2022: p... this volume)

Pignol points out that modern realist novels deal with economic problems that plague the common person and gives these pursuits and issues a dignity by placing the characters and their concerns at the centre of the narrative or discourse. As Pignol notes in this literature, the power by which the novel imitates reality as experienced by every day individuals makes us understand reality in ways that ancient literature and drama would have been incapable of doing. A refreshing insight in Pignol's chapter is how economics and literature can work together in providing a complex picture of the individuals' behaviour and their psychological universe. As Pignol notes

literary accounts of economics ... show, by construction, what escapes economic thought: the content of our representations of economic happiness and misfortune, and the opacity and contradictions of our desires, expectations and feelings. Literature is helpful by bringing into the light our singular experiences of economics.

(Pignol 2022: p... this volume)

Pignol uses as examples novels written by Georges Perec, Svetlana Alexievich and Édouard Louis to show the vapidness of consumer culture and also the desire behind acquiring new objects. The point of this conflicting depiction is to escape the urge to caricature reality through literature in order to criticise a simplistic representation of economic theorising. Instead, for Pignol, literature investigates where economics cannot go – the existentialist concerns which underlie our material universe and its consumerist pleasures.

This useful distinction between caricature and true representation in conjunction with the debate on the ancient vs modern literature and art finds its counterpoint in the next chapter by Foteini Lika. Her focus on men of feeling reaffirms the romantic vision by quoting Woodworth “all good poetry is the spontaneous overflowing of powerful feelings” (Lika 2022: p... this volume). Here, the dichotomy of rational vs sentimental man completely breaks down as Lika shows how ironic and even nonsensical it is when characters resort to mechanical felicific calculus to deal with extreme situations of life and death. She quotes Roidis’ *Sensitive Man* where the character bemoans his kind heart as he has accepted to wake up early in the morning in order to stand as a second to a close friend who is to duel and possibly lose his life – in which case he may have to also pay the coachman’s fare, an extra cost to consider. The sheer banality of these considerations, comically captured, achieves the opposite result to what Pignol outlined in the previous chapter – comic release through irony and the surrealism of the situation instead of deep realism through association with everyday characters and their concerns. As Lika argues, this critical viewpoint offers another perspective to the everyday and the extreme situations characters find themselves in. Irony, incompleteness, contradictions and the ability to imagine solutions that could not be arrived at through reason alone give characters a verisimilitude and at the same time give the reader tools for imaginative tropes and escapism so that they can also survive their own everyday reality.

In Likas’ chapter, the link between economics and literature becomes a veritable tug-of-war. Malthus’ population doctrine is seen as the epitome of an unfeeling view of reality that should be satirised and even ridiculed. Reading 19th century literature through the prism of the population debates instigated by Malthus’ work gives it a depth that may be otherwise lost and shows the deep connection between literature and political economy at the time. At this juncture, it is hard not to remember the first lines of *Pride and Prejudice*, which famously are:

It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.

However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighbourhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered the rightful property of someone or other of their daughters.

(Austin 1853: 1)

One naturally assumes that the neighbours being well-bread and well-read had in mind Malthus' work, who noted "It is clearly the duty of each individual not to marry till he has a prospect of supporting his children" (Malthus 1996 [1803]: 492–93). But once this condition is fulfilled, an objective condition any neighbour versed in basic home economics could check out for themselves, the field is open and the marriage game begins. Here, again, in a sarcastic fashion, we see how the narratives of the romantic and the rational get intertwined in a literature that not only pokes fun but also essentially assimilates the logic of political economy.

This dichotomy of enlightenment vs romantic views of social reality that has occupied this introduction until now comes itself under implicit scrutiny in the third chapter by Stratos Myrogiannis. The focus is on the most prominent Modern Greek Enlightenment scholar, Adamantios Korais, who played a crucial role in the creation of the Modern Greek language, identity and culture. Korais, with his writings, had the double purpose of helping Modern Greeks gain their independence and form a new state on the enlightenment principles that he espoused and tried to transfer to the Greek-speaking population. His main weapon is his effort to create a Modern Greek language that has the philological gravitas befitting the legacy of Ancient Greek and, at the same time, is in tune with modern sensibilities. As Myrogiannis argues using the framework of Hayden White, historians create a version of their past that suits their purpose and interests of the past and about the past. The discourses that historians create not only define their narrative but also create their own reality. Korais' efforts and achievements influenced not only his reading and writings of history but also the very evolution of the Modern Greek language and Modern Greek identity.

In Korais' work, imitation or mimesis as a philosophical principle takes on another purpose – not only imitating nature in a proper fashion, as Lessing would argue, but also imitating the great nations of the West in order to become like them and one of them. He argues of a new Greek poetry across the lines of western literature so as to fashion a Modern

Greek identity and language in the same way countries copy the economic organisation of the West. He writes revealingly: “Today, it is easy to transfer Enlightenment from one country to the other. As easily as transferring products and commercial goods” (Coray 1803: 62). And thus, the enlightenment project of representing faithfully reality through a refinement of technique and the separation of disciplines with clear and distinct remit undergoes a dramatic makeover as mimesis becomes the ultimate weapon of artistic expression in an effort to transform reality to meet the scholar’s imagination and aspirations for the Greek nation.

With Myrogiannis’ chapter, we transition out of the first part of the volume and into the next section that focuses directly on the interface of economics with architecture and figurative art. The fourth chapter written by Stavros Alifragkis focuses on the influence economic terms and their viewpoint of the world had on 20th century architecture. By discussing the aesthetic of the modern ocean liner, Alifragkis shows how perceptions of efficiency became central, not only for comfort and reducing production cost but also as an aesthetic principle. With efficiency and functionalism as the organising architectural principle, there is a clear break with the sensibilities of the past, a brake that, according to the proponents of the modernist movement, is based on logic and rationality for better living conditions and an environment uncluttered by unnecessary baggage.

The relation of this aesthetic viewpoint to economics is not merely incidental. As Alifragkis writes “In *Vers une Architecture*, Le Corbusier’s investigations into modernity take the shape of a discussion on design optimisation as an experimental, evolutionary process toward perfected products” (Alifragkis 2022: p... this volume). Le Corbusier’s quest becomes a war with entrenched beliefs of the past and an emotional investment into the new aesthetic language that guides production from the time of the industrial revolution. Alifragkis writes that this new type of elegance and harmony in architecture “can be observed in the transformative evolution of production processes and performances that ‘come from the workshop or the factory [...] a whole world working with perception, intelligence and precision [...]’ (Le Corbusier 1986: 102)” (Alifragkis 2022: p... this volume). It is hard not to parallel this view with Smith’s opening pages of the *Wealth of Nations*, where the pin factory is not only seen as a harbinger of the industrial future but also as a moral and even aesthetic improvement over the past. The traditional small-scale producer, writes Smith

when he first begins the new work he is seldom very keen and hearty; his mind, as they say, does not go to it, and for some time he rather trifles than applies to good purpose. The habit of sauntering and of indolent careless application, which is naturally, or rather necessarily

acquired by every country workman who is obliged to change his work and his tools every half hour, [...] renders him almost always slothful and lazy, and incapable of any vigorous application even on the most pressing occasions.

(Smith 1999: 114)

And, thus, the break between a sauntering and unproductive past and the promise of a logical, organised and efficient future based on rational decisions and a quest for efficiency binds (neo)classical economics and modernism into a common aesthetic journey.

Alifragkis' chapter ends with an assault on modernism in the form of a question. Is what we call efficient simply what we like and inefficient what we don't? Or to put the question in a more tangible form, is the whole new language of efficiency and economy towards a refined final product more of a rhetorical notion by the modernists and at best an indication of their sensibilities and interests rather than anything else? At a deeper level, this question is aimed at abstract theorising in general. What is its use, is it simply to put in formal terms the theorists' own beliefs and bias and little else?

This issue opens the next chapter by Ragupathy Venkatachalam that questions the very nature and point of system building that are pervasive in the social sciences and, in their own way, in the arts. Venkatachalam uses René Magritte and Escher to show that the point of art is anything but straightforward, and by analogy, the point of modelling should be viewed in the same complex manner. Venkatachalam's chapter introduces forcefully the concept of the absurd in quasi-realistic or superficially natural depictions. How can something both make sense and be absurd is a question that Escher's work brings dramatically to the forefront. What happens when what we see and what we are told are disjointed? The simplest (and even banal) answer is that it gives us pause. Venkatachalam perceptively writes that it does more than that: "Provocative artworks often shape perceptions to varying degrees by cleverly reorienting our attention, thereby stroking our imagination, creating a sense of wonder, appealing to our senses and even challenging our prevailing views of reality and the status quo" (Venkatachalam 2022: p... this volume). It is in this space, opened by the disjunction that new ideas form, that theoretical investigation has its most dramatic breakthroughs. Venkatachalam argues that

the fruitfulness of such an approach in economics is illustrated by drawing examples from the works of Kenneth Arrow, Piero Sraffa and Vela Velupillai. Each of them, in their own way, used formal frameworks to show impossibilities, indeterminacies and undecidabilities, thereby forging new ways to think about economic problems.

(Venkatachalam 2022: p... this volume)

In the chapter we see an entirely unexpected answer to the question of mimetic vs. artistic expression that has formed the organising centre of our investigation. It is not only that art is not intended to mimic nature but more that it becomes a philosophical tool through which nature is observed. Venkatachalam's analogy in the realm of economics makes a similar claim. The most robust abstract theories are there to make us sceptical, to make us question our understanding of reality not to resolve problems in a definite manner. The system builders he investigates – Arrow, Sraffa and Velupillai – have a large and diverse following because they have been able to create unique visions of the social world. But Venkatachalam argues that their success lies elsewhere. Not as theoretical edifices whose completeness and illuminating lustre acts as beacons across a sea of incomplete and chaotic thoughts but rather as refinements of everyday thought that have reached their terminus point, their point of disjunction. Their strength lies in showing the limits of theorising, in the most refined way. They are there not to display their massive ramparts and gleaming turrets but to expose the sand on which they are built.

This answer leads us to a nihilism that seems impossible to escape. If our most complex abstractions are neither the best attempts at realism nor unshakable totems to the power of the human mind, what else is there to hope for? Perhaps not much. The last chapter of the section eschews answers to such grand questions and intends only to offer quick fixes until we come up with something better. Repapis returns to architecture taking the opposite journey to Alifragkis' chapter, by trying to import ideas from architecture into economics. The chapter introduces the romantic notion of the fragment as a building block to broader understandings of social reality. The fragment is linked to a fragmentary view of reality – an attempt to mediate the ground between grand theory and complex reality. Repapis argues that fragments of theory and theoretical investigation, like architectural fragments, are really *spolia*, repossessed pieces from narratives (like buildings) that stood before and bring with them their own past and world view. This view of *spolia* as forming economics texts which now become new organisms that assimilate but are also shaped by them shows a dynamic element in theorising that can have no endpoint but can yield some insights in the interim. Repapis argues

that this is a fruitful way to read complex texts in economics and especially Keynes' *General Theory*. However, this reaffirmation of the romantic viewpoint comes with a compromise. Without grand arches, there is no material to repossess. The romantic poets are proved right, but they are also scavengers.

This brings us to the three contributions of the last section that deals with reflections on the themes developed in this introduction and across the chapters of the first two sections. The first reflection by Sarath Jakka returns to the problem of the limits of abstraction by reviewing the work of E.F. Schumacher. In a way, Jakka's chapter returns to the considerations of Pignol's chapter, which is a question of the meta-economic concerns we have and the limits of the quantitative approach and language of economics. He points out that there are ways to think about the world outside the mechanistic mathematical constructs of economists, and in this, he agrees with Schumacher's belief that we need to place limits on individual and collective needs as a useful starting point. Problems like environmental sustainability cannot be solved within the calculative mode of modern economics. Mechanically accounting for the welfare of future generations and discounting through some heuristic their welfare to compare with the necessary environmental sacrifices of today will not lead to solutions but simply to more confusion.

Jakka's deeper point is that we should not gloss over uncertainty and ambiguity by presenting false certainties. A dose of scepticism is not to be avoided but necessary when dealing with complex issues which have no simple answers. One of the most revealing passages in this chapter is Schumacher's approach to maps. Jakka quotes the following passage:

The first principle of the philosophical map-makers seemed to be 'If in doubt, leave it out,' or put it into a museum. It occurred to me, however, that the question of what constitutes proof was a very subtle and difficult one. Would it not be wiser to turn the principle into its opposite and say 'If in doubt, show it prominently'? After all, matters that are beyond doubt are, in a sense, dead; they do not constitute a challenge to the living.

(Schumacher 1978: 11)

The point is that map makers and maps as objects of knowledge have a natural disposition to illuminate what they know and obscure what they do not. This reorienting towards the limits of knowledge rather than the certainties returns to the themes explored in Venkatachalam's chapter.

In the next chapter, Uebel returns to the same problem when he writes “A single true description of a completely independent reality – of the kind, for example, the metaphysical realist posits – cannot exist since the world does not determine unitary answers to basic ontological questions independently of our mobile conceptual assumptions” (Uebel 2022: p... this volume). His answer is to engage in equanimity, since “Perspectivism, like equanimity, is about nothing other than the accumulation of different points of view in pursuit of knowledge” (Uebel 2022: p... this volume). One interesting aspect of this reflective chapter is the return to mimesis as a way forward but through an entirely different path. Uebel writes extensively on the epistemology of Goethe’s “delicate empiricism”. Goethe’s departure from Newton’s conception of light and colour is an attempt to return to a morphology of light as a way to understand and organise nature. This may be an attempt to imitating nature in a very different light than the attempt to find abstract theories that build it up from an elemental understanding – the scientific project underlying Newton’s conception. Uebel’s perspectivism is partly to reconcile these ways of analysis as both useful and necessary – there are many ways to imitate nature. Like Jakka, the effort is to create a level playing field in a world in which scientific endeavours, narrowly defined, seem to be the only ones that command attention as truths.

Sheila Dow’s concluding chapter discusses another angle of economic theorising – its internal pluralism. Dow notes the difference between mainstream and non-mainstream ways of doing economics and that they hold substantial differences not only in their methodology and ontology but also in the way they interact with other disciplines including the arts. Here, the distinction between certainty, a criterion of paramount importance for mainstream theory, and uncertainty, a feature of non-mainstream approaches is linked to the way one can do theorising. Open systems allow and need plurality of viewpoints, whereas closed ones focus on unidimensional analytical truths. But in both cases, persuasion is necessary to make their point to a diverse audience. Dow notes that Adam Smith was aware that “different systems of thought can arise, the success of each depending on powers of persuasion, with aesthetic appeal playing a powerful role” (Dow 2022: p... this volume). This rounds up this volume on economics and art theory by noting that however much we may think artistic considerations are different and distinct to rational analysis, in the end, our choice of analytical framework is an aesthetic choice, and this makes the whole storytelling of economics, like that of art, an aesthetic as much as a rational experience.

In conclusion, the dialogue between economics and art theory or more broadly the humanities can be a fruitful one in ways that are unexpected. We can corral insights from the chapters in the following three categories:

- A) Several contributors point to how core concepts or theoretical insights in one field are viewed outside that discipline, and through this exchange, these concepts gain a more complex meaning. For example, Lika's chapter shows the way rational men are satirised in 19th century literature and also points to the fact that literature legitimises this new logic of political economy. Pignol's chapter sees how consumer wants are seen and problematised in literature, noting that literature can cover the ground that economics cannot extend into. Alifragkis unravels the complex meanings that efficiency takes as a production and an aesthetic imperative in architecture, but also, and by implication also in economics.
- B) Ontological questions can gain depth and be viewed from an entirely different light when pre-conceptions are questioned from the vantage point of a radically different field. For example, the insight that creative disjunction can be a way to see some of the constructs of abstract economic theorising is argued by Venkatachalam. Jakka's chapter asks us to not gloss over uncertainties but tries to be open and reflective about what we don't know. This is further strengthened in Uebel's chapter which at its core argues that we need to see beyond ontological clashes drawn along partisan disciplinary lines and embrace the possibility of complex truths.
- C) This naturally draws us to discuss methods and the way interdisciplinary dialogue may enhance methodological pluralism. For example, Repapis uses the framework developed for architectural spolia to analyse Keynes' *General Theory*. Dow discusses the importance of persuasion and aesthetic judgement when deciding between systems of thought and analysis. And Myrogiannis uses the framework of Hayden White to point to the fact that each narrative creates its own reality.

Thus, these contributions are not the end of the journey of interdisciplinary dialogue and exchange. Instead, we hope that they point to new avenues of research to be taken up in the future. This collection intends to show that insights can be found in the most unexpected of places – as long as researchers have an openness to see and an interest to engage with radically different forms of discourse and knowledge creation to what they are accustomed to.

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¹ See, e.g., the classic contribution of Baumol and Bawer (1966) or more recently Ginsburgh and Throsby (2006, 2013) for a survey of the literature.

² Further introductions to this literature can be found in Towse and Hernández (2020) and Snowball (2007).

³ This was by no means the first investigation on the matter. Henderson (1995) had investigated economic texts of the past which had a more 'literary' form and McCloskey (1985, 1994) worked on key aspects of rhetoric in economics – to name only two celebrated contributions in a large field. The introduction by Woodmansee and Osteen (1999) offers an authoritative guide to this literature up to that point.