Introduction

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Abstract and Keywords
One of the most important and exciting aspects of university life is the lively interchange of ideas. This took place in the Amherst Economics Department of the University of Massachusetts as “cross-paradigmatic” interaction among four competing paradigms: neoclassical economics, Marxism combined with political and social liberalism, Marxism combined with Keynesian economics, and Marxism as the mutual interaction of all analytical elements. One side effect of these interactions involved conflicts that arose in administering the Department as the different constituencies had different visions of how the Department should be run. Another side effect was the prodigious research output that emerged from the Department.

Keywords: intellectual interaction, perfection, paradigm, research output, cross-paradigmatic interaction, Marxism, neoclassical economics, Keynesian economics

Ask ev'ry person if he's heard the story;

And tell it strong and clear if he has not:
That once there was a fleeting wisp of glory

Called Camelot.

A.J. Lerner and F. Lowe, *Camelot*

Economics is an intellectually challenging and socially and culturally significant discipline. It emerged from the shadows of moral philosophy and mercantilism in the eighteenth century to acquire a nascent autonomy in David Hume's *Essays Moral, Political and Literary* (1752) and Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (1776). Its early designation as political economy pointed to its relevance for the state of human affairs and for the wider aspects of social discourse. As the industrial revolution advanced, businessmen welcomed what it had to say about the generation of incomes, wealth, and general prosperity. Drawing-room courtesies and conversation embraced its aims and claims, and its practitioners, notable in the case of David Ricardo, acquired seats in the British parliament. Economics, as it came to be called, had become a subject in which laymen needed to take an interest, often making more than a mere dilettantish acknowledgment of it. Its scope and cogency seemed to argue for new possibilities of human good. Its nineteenth-century classical and neoclassical formulations asserted that the structure of social relations was such that the economy would automatically lead to optimum welfare and generalized benefit. However, dissent lay not very far beneath the surface. Methodological revolutions defied accepted and traditional assumptions, and conflicts of explanatory approaches recurred. What economics was doing and what it should be about became matters of sharpening debate. The conflicts over approaches grew as the twists and cycles of economic prosperity in the late nineteenth and throughout the twentieth century confronted intellectual complacencies. But two propositions became unarguably clear: that economics had something significant to contribute to human welfare, and that some understanding of what the subject involved was a necessary part of a lay person's education.

Along with acceptance of the latter proposition, economics acquired its own respected place among traditional university disciplines. And it was within the university environment that the debates described earlier were most vigorously pursued. Indeed, the hold-over of income and wealth disparities from
the industrial revolution, the manner in which the economic aspect of affairs impinged on the state of the poor and relatively disadvantaged, and a recurring concern for the possibility of conflicts between economic and social classes combined to give the subject a heightened diversity of viewpoint and argument.

The chapters that follow will bring to prominence a foremost and uniquely remarkable instance of the approach struggles that have occurred in universities within the economics discipline. The story told will be of interest, not only to those who were caught up in the relevant historical movements, but also to those whose inquisitiveness leads them to explorations of the logic of social and political discourse. For from the mid 1970s through the mid 1980s (of necessity, the present narrative actually begins earlier) the University of Massachusetts at Amherst gave hospitality to one of the most significant experiments in academic cultural change that have occurred in American intellectual history. The issues that story raises bring into focus a recurring question of academic and administrative importance: To what extent is perfection on the levels of administration and scholarship attainable, or even approachable, in an imperfect world? That question raises, of course, others of obvious and even critical significance. For example, what is to be held as the criteria of perfection on the levels in view? And how, on the level of administration, are those criteria to contribute to the wider objectives of university ambience and culture; and on the level of scholarship, what is to determine significance, worthiness, and fitness in the larger scope of learning?

The perfect world, as it appears in Lerner and Lowe's vision of the Arthurian legend, is one in which knights would lay down their arms. Physical force would be employed only for the destruction of evil. Knights would sit at a table that was round (without the head position of a rectangular table) so that all would have equal status, and jealousies would not, therefore, arise. Chivalry and civility would reign supreme, there would be justice for all, and everyone would live happily ever after. Of course, such perfection in any context, is, to the extent that it can be realized, ephemeral and dreamlike. The ideal itself is elusive and illusory, and cannot fully exist among human beings in reality. Shortly after Arthur created his faultless
Camelot, human frailties intruded and cracks appeared in it. Those frailties eventually led to its demise.

Academic departments, too, sometimes strive for a perfection that also turns out to be fleeting and flawed. That was certainly the case with the Economics Department at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst during the mid- to late 1970s and early (p.4) to mid-1980s. But to revert to a question already raised, what precisely was the perfection the Department pursued? And how close did it come to achieving it? One way of answering these questions, and one way of approaching the interpretation of what went on in the Department during the period, is suggested by referring to the conclusions advanced by certain scholars who were concerned with what a university is and what it ought to be doing.

For example, in the middle of the nineteenth century, Cardinal Newman described a university as “. . . the high protecting power of all knowledge and science, of fact and principle, of inquiry and discovery, of experiment and speculation; it maps out the territory of the intellect.”1 Although Newman thought that the only function of the university was to provide education to its students,2 and argued that that education should consist of the pursuit of “liberal” as opposed to useful knowledge,3 his statement can certainly be construed as identifying a substantial part of what goes on at the multifunctional universities that exist today. Many of those universities claim, as does the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, that their primary functions are to engage in knowledge-extending and knowledge-clarifying research, to teach their undergraduate and graduate students, and to provide service to the communities in which they are located. Although the rhetoric that explains these functions often attributes identical importance and weight to each, it is usually the case that research dominates. As George Orwell put it: “All animals are equal. But some animals are more equal than others.”4 And the same emphasis on research is evident in the writings of those who followed Newman. (p.5)

Thus, almost eighty years later, Abraham Flexner expanded Newman’s conceptualization by asserting that the scholars and scientists of a university should be “. . . conscious of four major concerns: the conservation of knowledge and ideas; the interpretation of knowledge and ideas; the search for truth; [and] the training of students . . . .”5 He went on to say that at
universities, “. . . fresh streams of thought are constantly playing upon the preserved treasures of mankind,”\textsuperscript{6} and “. . . calm, philosophic reflection can be brought to bear . . .” on “. . . the theoretical consequences of scientific progress.”\textsuperscript{7} With respect to social science, “The university must shelter and develop thinkers . . . who . . . will explore the phenomena of social life and endeavour to understand them.”\textsuperscript{8} Moreover, “. . . there is no telling from what source the magic fact or the magic conception will come. The very breadth of the university increases greatly its potential fertility.”\textsuperscript{9} In short, a university is “. . . an institution consciously devoted to the pursuit of knowledge, the solution of problems, the critical appreciation of achievement, and the training of men . . . .”\textsuperscript{10}

As a final illustration, consider the words of Noah E. Fehl: “There is no other aspect of the nature . . . of a university that is so essential to an understanding of its unique character as its origin as a guild, . . . [a] guild of masters and apprentices in the art of learning and the communication of knowledge.”\textsuperscript{11} Masters and apprentices are engaged in “. . . the probing of thoughts and the weighing of \textbf{(p.6)} insights and foresights.”\textsuperscript{12} “Scholarship proceeds by stimulation and inspiration on the level of the masters as well as on that of the students. The master needs those with whom he can think out loud and who can be casually critical and informally helpful just as he needs to hear the thinking out loud of others. . . . He knows the importance of the day to day exchange of ideas, the benefit of the new angle, the suggestion of a book he had not come across, the fraternal criticism of a judgment where his own competence had blinded him to other alternatives.”\textsuperscript{13}

These examples suggest that the ideal university is a place where free and open discourse on any intellectual topic, no matter how mundane or outlandish, frequently occurs. Hypotheses, perhaps rather far-fetched, are put forward, arguments are pursued, questions are raised, and criticisms, suggestions, and judgments are made. Approaches to the solutions of problems are modified, discarded, and may be reintroduced. Opinions are reversed and may be reversed back to their original forms. The give and take among individuals in such exchanges can be intense and highly stimulating. The greater the diversity of the individuals involved, the more
wide-ranging the discussion. Thus the ideal university is an intellectually lively and exciting place.

In today's world, however, universities are too vast and complex to expect much intellectual interaction to occur regularly across academic disciplines. It is more likely that such activity will arise within them. And it is that kind of perfection, consisting of intense intellectual interaction and the considerable stimulation that goes with it, that an academic department might decide to pursue. No doubt there are departments that, to one extent or another, have come close to achieving it. (p.7)

Implicit in this notion of an ideal university is the requirement that the intellectual exchanges just described lead to the development of knowledge and its dissemination. New ideas and approaches are proposed and pursued to the fullest extent possible. When appropriate, they are then published in scholarly journals or books to inform the general academic community and invite it to participate in further discussion. Thus the intellectual interaction on which the notion of perfection is based is a significant part of the research function of the university. And the closer to perfection in this regard a university comes, the more original and deep its research output.

However, the Economics Department at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst in the mid- to late 1970s and early to mid-1980s was special in that the perfection contemplated meant considerably more than this. One way to understand why is to consider the notion of paradigm as introduced by Thomas Kuhn in 1962. A paradigm is a way of viewing and understanding the real world that provides a context for conducting analyses of it. It contains assumptions about the fundamental nature of certain aspects of reality that are considered to be basic and are unquestioningly accepted by adherents to it. And it provides prescriptions for the pursuit of research, including the character of the questions asked, and the approaches taken to answer them. Because, in these terms, the differences between paradigms is so great, cross-paradigmatic discussions and other communication is rather difficult. Moreover, paradigms can neither be compared (because they focus on distinct phenomena or distinct aspects of those phenomena) nor empirically established (because all empirical studies necessarily rest on (p.8) the foundation of
some paradigm in the first place). Thus, it is possible, for example, to regard classical mechanics, thermodynamics, general relativity, and quantum mechanics as separate paradigms in the field of physics. Those paradigms complement and coordinate with each other in that each focuses its attention on explaining a different aspect of physical reality.

Now, to the extent that perfection of intense intellectual interaction occurs among the individuals of an academic department, it typically arises within the context of a given paradigm. Assumptions relating to a particular issue may be questioned, issue-specific approaches and arguments may be criticized and challenged, and judgments may be made, but they are all constrained by an accepted vision of the way the world operates, an accepted set of underlying assumptions about that reality, and an accepted overall approach to the pursuit of scholarship in the general field of inquiry. By contrast, the acute and vigorous intellectual interaction in the Economics Department at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst during the mid- to late 1970s and early to mid-1980s occurred across different paradigms.\textsuperscript{15} And that gave it a depth and intensity that brought it much closer to the ideal, and that was quite unusual in a university community even when considering, say, the multiple paradigms present in physics mentioned earlier. Although, in the case of physics, the paradigms were, as previously noted, cooperative in explaining physical reality, between 1974 and 1985, no less than four major paradigms could be discerned within the Economics Department that were competing among each other to explain the same phenomenon, namely, the workings of the real economic world. Competition arose in that the adherents of each paradigm believed that the approach to reality on which their paradigm focused, and the understandings that emerged from their analyses, provided the appropriate way to view and explain economic behavior. It was the rivalry between those paradigms that set the tone of discussion in the Department and imbued it with an unusual life and energy. In this sense, the Department came closer to the perfection previously described than that achieved throughout most American universities.
One of the paradigms represented in the Department, the neoclassical paradigm, was dominant in the economics profession of the time. On the most fundamental level, that paradigm was based on the notion that observations of economic reality are separate from thoughts about that reality. The scholar stands apart from the economic world he is trying to analyze scientifically and explain. The most basic units in that world are taken to be consumers and firms, and all analytical structures in it are constituted from those units. Markets are comprised of individual consumers and firms; the economy is made up by the fusing together of all such markets. Consumers and firms are rational actors pursuing behaviors that are consistent with their self-interests. Markets and the economy as a whole tend toward equilibrium, a position of rest in which there is no tendency for anything to change or any unit to change what it is doing, and in which, as a result, economic reality continuously reproduces itself.

Perhaps the most common particularization of this vision was that of the general equilibrium system that explains the workings of the perfectly competitive microeconomy: Consumers are endowed with resources that are sold to obtain income with which to buy commodities. Buying and selling decisions are derived from maximization of appropriately specified objective functions in relation to individuals’ preferences. Firms hire inputs to produce and sell outputs, and all production energy is geared to the maximization of their profit or the economic value of the activity in which they engage. The markets in which all buying and selling activity takes place are themselves perfectly competitive. That is, each has large numbers of small buyers and sellers, a standardized product, free entry into and exit from the market for any unit in the economy, and all market participants know everything there is to know about every commodity and what each participant is doing. The equilibrium in the perfectly competitive economy is usually referred to as “general” equilibrium. This representation of the microeconomy was also thought to be the basis for understanding the macroeconomy in relation to what was then known as the “neoclassical synthesis.”

Two of the faculty members in the Economics Department who were associated with this paradigm were James K. Kindahl and myself.16
The remaining three paradigms all fell within the field referred to as radical political economy. This multiparadigmatic field, as it existed in the 1970s and 1980s, grew out of interest in the study of economic inequality and imperialism. Because neoclassical economics had little to say on these subjects that was not considered to be either unsatisfactory or apologetic, economists interested in them turned to the writings of Karl Marx and other nonorthodox economists. Although there is no succinct generalization that can (p.11) fully describe the field of radical political economy in its entirety, one central characteristic

... is the premise that there are conflicts of power and interests between groups and classes in society and that the dominant groups exercise determining influences on economic thought as well as on economic activity. The economy is viewed as part of a socio-cultural system; it is formed by this system, but at the same time influences culture and society. [Thus any] ... understanding of economic phenomena can only take place ... [from an interdisciplinary perspective]. When the economy is viewed in this way, a major role is given to institutions in the determination of economic life.19

Another focal point is the idea that history plays a substantial role in the shaping of actual conflict and institutions, and is another significant determinant of current economic life. Thus, conflict, institutions, and history lie at the core of radical political economics. Because conflict and inequality are also important issues in the labor movement, the frequent interaction between radical economists and labor unions is not surprising. Sometimes, following the practice in the Economics Department at the time, the word radical will be dropped and the field will be referred to as simply “political economy.” Alternatively, the term “radical economics” will occasionally be employed. Economists (and students) whose work is primarily associated with that field will often be called radical economists (or students), or just radicals for short. (p.12)

A second paradigm, one of the three political-economy paradigms and identified in the Economics Department with the names of Samuel S. Bowles and Herbert Gintis (among others), took the same position concerning the separation of reality and thoughts about it as the neoclassical paradigm. Also in confluence with that paradigm, methods of analysis were to be scientific in that ideas could be formalized and checked, at least in principle, against reality. But it departed
from the neoclassical paradigm in its association with both Marxism and political and social liberalism. Indeed, Marxian thought, having to do with the workings of reality in terms of dialectical materialism, and liberalism as it bore on freedom, democracy, and individual rights, provided the context within which the economy was understood and studied. The issues fundamental to that study, in contrast to those of the neoclassical paradigm, related to the role of collective action and conflict among groups in bringing about change, the dynamic and endogenous quality of preferences and technologies, the nature of employment as a struggle between relatively powerless employees and considerably more powerful employers, and the historically specific character of capitalism.

The third paradigm linked to James R. Crotty and partly to Leonard A. Rapping (at least during his early years at the University of Massachusetts) assumed the identical stance concerning the importance of scientific analysis and the separation of reality from thoughts about it. But it was concerned with the macroeconomy as a whole rather than with the individual units that comprise it. Insights into the workings of the macroeconomy were drawn from the writings of Marx that had to do with the reserve army of the unemployed, the role of money, finance, credit, and so on. These elements were combined with the ideas of Keynes,\(^{21}\) not those translated and transported by Hicks\(^{22}\) and others into what was referred to earlier as the neoclassical synthesis, but rather those that could not be fitted into that synthesis and were left behind by it. Emphasis on the latter led to a conceptualization of Keynesianism that differed from the Keynesian component of the neoclassical synthesis in its theoretical structure, methodology, and policy prescriptions. It included, for example, the notions that the future is unknowable, even probabilistically, and that decisions made now that affect it are largely irreversible. The macroeconomic issues of unemployment, price stability, and economic growth were approached from these perspectives, and the vision of the operation of the macroeconomy implied by them was quite different from that obtained through the lens of the neoclassical paradigm.
Another aspect of this latter difference arose from the fact that, up through the early 1970s, the traditional approach within the neoclassical paradigm assumed that macroeconomic models were built up from the microeconomic general equilibrium system described earlier.\(^\text{23}\) It was not until the late 1970s that economists began to realize that this might not be the appropriate or most productive procedure.\(^\text{24}\) But in moving away from the general equilibrium system as a base, macroeconomics was still thought to be founded on microeconomic ideas. However, the Crotty-Rapping paradigm viewed macroeconomics as primary and microeconomic structures as dependent on the state of the macroeconomy.

The last paradigm, represented in the Economics Department by Stephen A. Resnik and Richard D. Wolff, was based on an interpretation of Marxian analysis that rejects the separation (present \(\text{p.14}\) in the other three paradigms) of economic reality from thoughts about it.\(^\text{25}\) Everything in actuality—physical, social, mental, and so forth—is assumed to interact in a mutually constitutive manner with everything else. No economic phenomenon can be understood by detaching it from the milieu of all other economic and noneconomic things and events, including the mental processes of the scholar who is attempting to understand it. The development of these ideas led to what Resnick and Wolff referred to as “overdetermination.” Variables, relations, and systems can all be employed to analyze and understand economic reality, but they cannot stand independently on their own. In conducting an economic analysis, such things as the purposes and limits of the analysis, the time interval to be covered, the language, and rules of reasoning are all determined as part of the analysis. And no economic event has a single cause or essence that accounts for its occurrence. To explain the presence of an event—for example, the transition from feudalism to capitalism in Western Europe between 1100 and 1500 AD—requires the recognition of the multitude of mutually interactive elements that led to its being and the homing in on those elements that seem to be most significant.

The starting point for all analyses that fall within this paradigm is the notion of economic class. The latter is defined as that relationship among people in which individuals working for others, that is workers, create surplus value, or
the amount by which the value of goods and services produced by those workers exceeds the value the workers are paid. The analyses themselves “. . . focus (p.15)

Table 1.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paradigm</th>
<th>Names Identified in the Text</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neoclassical</td>
<td>Katzner, Kindahl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marxism combined with political and social liberalism</td>
<td>Bowles, Gintis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marxism combined with Keynesian macroeconomics</td>
<td>Crotty, Rapping</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marxism as the mutual interaction of all analytical elements</td>
<td>Resnick, Wolff</td>
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on the class aspects, class causes, and class consequences of social life“ and, not unlike the previously described paradigms in which Bowles and Gintis and Crotty and Rapping worked, they covered such topics as labor power, capital accumulation, economic crises, and imperialism.

The four paradigms are listed in Table 1.1 along with the aforementioned names of the faculty members identified with them.

Another matter relating to the presence of the four paradigms set out earlier deserves mention. In the academic economics profession, there was (and still is) a strong establishment of economists, mostly in the major academic departments, that tightly controlled the intellectual content appearing in the articles of most economics journals and whose views were accepted by most individuals in most economics departments. This control consisted of the setting of fairly narrow rules that defined the limits of acceptable research in the field. Among other things, those rules identified the kinds (p.16) of questions that were worth asking along with the nature of the techniques that could be used to answer them. Of course, rewards (e.g., journal articles published, promotions, etc.) usually went only to those who successfully followed the rules.

But during the 1970s and 1980s those rules excluded many of the issues raised and analyses conducted within the three paradigms of (radical) political economy. Thus, the establishment rules determining acceptable creative work
could not be applied to much of the research output of the University of Massachusetts Economics Department. In that department, then, publication in nonestablishment approved venues was, of necessity, both considered to be adequate and rewarded. The absence of establishment rules meant that the faculty, including those who worked in the neoclassical paradigm, had unprecedented freedom to choose the directions in which their research progressed. This openness within the Department was a significant contributor to the intellectual creativity and excitement among its faculty and students.

Clearly, individuals who represented any one of the four major paradigms appearing in the University of Massachusetts Economics Department viewed the operation of the economic world in vastly different terms from those who subscribed to the others. And this, in turn, led to remarkably deep, highly intense, enormously stimulating, and always lively discussions concerning various economic issues. These discussions took place among faculty members either directly or indirectly through their students, among students, and between faculty and students. The questions at issue were not of the same kind as, for example, “Should decision-makers’ preferences that are taken as given be assumed to have this or that property?” Rather, they were more on the order of “Do preferences that are given have any relevance at all to the problem at hand?” There is no doubt that the first type of question is important within the context of the paradigm within which it was raised. But the second type arises on a much more fundamental level.

To illustrate these kinds of interactions, consider my own experience in teaching graduate microeconomic theory from the neoclassical paradigm. Between the fall of 1975 and the mid 1980s, I taught two courses in this area each year, one a course required for the PhD degree in the traditional theory of the consumer, the firm, and markets, and the other an optional course in the theory of general equilibrium. Often a radical faculty member would criticize an aspect of microeconomic theory in a graduate course he was teaching. Frequently the students in his course were simultaneously taking graduate microeconomic theory from me and, in my class, those students would ask me about the criticism. I would respond by
answering the criticism, and they would report back to their radical instructor. A rejoinder would be communicated back to me again through the students, and the discussion would go on.

In addition, with their mostly nontraditional backgrounds and interests in radical political economics, the questions the graduate students asked in my classes were generally, from my vantage point as a traditional economist, important, interesting, and unlike any I had ever heard before. For example, the students who, in spite of their lack of interest, still knew that, as economists, they had to have some acquaintance with neoclassical economics, could not, coming from their mostly radical perspectives, understand why any economist should be concerned with the questions of existence, uniqueness, and stability of equilibria, either in reference to a system of equations depicting an isolated market or with respect to a model of the economy as a whole. To a mathematician there is no issue here: The purpose of mathematics is to explore the properties of formal structures and their implications, and the questions of existence, uniqueness, and stability of equilibria clearly fall within this realm. The purpose of economics, however, is to explain certain real world phenomena, and the manner in which those questions are related to such reality was not obvious.

Of course, I was quite familiar with the mathematics of existence, uniqueness, and stability issues. But, as someone who received his graduate education from mathematically trained economists in a standard economics department, and who, as a teacher and scholar having already taught in a number of such departments, I had never been asked about and had never given much thought to the methodological importance and significance of those issues. That had simply never come up in my experience; such things having always, as purely mathematical matters, been taken for granted. The same seemed to be true of many of my former colleagues. And so I was forced to confront some fundamental matters that lie at the heart of what economics is and how it goes about explaining economic phenomena. I found all this to be fascinating and remarkably stimulating. Thus, for me personally, the presence of the radicals contributed to an
unusual intellectual excitement and intensity that I fully enjoyed and from which I learned a great deal. (p.19)

These examples suggest the depth and intensity of discussion and questioning, and the stimulation and learning it provoked, that went on in the Economics Department in the mid 1970s through the mid 1980s. It is in this sense that the Department came very close—indeed, closer than most departments—to the notion of perfection described earlier.

The research output that emerged from this environment was both significant and extensive. Its significance lay in the challenge it presented to the neoclassical paradigm dominant at the time. Issues were raised, such as the power of some individuals over others within the firm, unemployment as a means of disciplining labor, and the endogeneity of preferences, that were thought to reside outside the boundaries of the neoclassical paradigm and that were, in one way or another, eventually co-opted by the establishment and subsequently introduced into a modified version of that paradigm. Extensiveness and a further indication of significance were suggested in a paper by Davis and Papanek who found that, with respect to numbers of citations in journals and books of published work by faculties as listed in the Social Sciences Citation Index and averaged over 1978 and 1981, the University of Massachusetts Economics Department ranked twenty-fourth among 122 PhD-granting institutions.31 When controlling for the age of faculties, that rank rose to nineteenth.32 This is rather astonishing given that, as pointed out earlier, many journals at the time (including those thought by the establishment to be most important) would not publish political-economy-type work produced by the Department and that, even when published, many economists simply ignored it. One can only guess at the extent to which the reputation of the (p.20) Department within the economics establishment would have been improved if the kind of political economy in vogue at the University of Massachusetts had been accepted and vigorously pursued by the economics establishment and its journals.

As has been indicated, the followers of the four major paradigms in the Economics Department saw the functioning of the economy in starkly contrasting terms. Those differences, moreover, extended to the operation of the Economics Department itself, especially in relation to graduate
students in their roles as both students and teaching assistants. It turned out that the radical economists from the three non-neoclassical paradigms were all united on this issue with a view that was quite distinct from that of the adherents to the neoclassical tradition. On the one hand, the latter perceived the education process in terms of the master-apprentice relation described in the writings of Fehl, mentioned earlier. Because of their greater experience and more extensive knowledge, the role of the faculty is to lead, whereas that of the graduate student as student and teaching or research assistant is to follow. Combining this with the fact that the faculty has a much longer-term interest in the Department itself, it is the faculty, and only the faculty, who should be making departmental decisions. The position of the radical faculty and graduate students, on the other hand, was expressed by Bowles and Gintis in their *Schooling in Capitalist America*.\(^{33}\) To prepare students for participation in democratic society and economic life, the educational system needs to be egalitarian and liberating (p. 14). And to achieve this, the educational process has to be democratic, with students and teachers sharing power in pursuing their common interests and in resolving conflicts that arise among them (p. 287). This meant that, at least at the graduate level, students would participate \(^{(p.21)}\) in the making of departmental decisions affecting them and their education. Not only were they to participate in determining the requirements and other particulars of the PhD program in which they were enrolled, but they were also to participate in such matters as the hiring of new faculty, the admission of new graduate students, and the assignment of teaching assistants to courses that employed them. In parallel with the intense discussions in the Department on economic matters, then, there often arose equally intense, if not more intense, interactions among graduate students and faculty, and within the faculty itself on questions relating to the actual operation of the Economics Department and its PhD program.

Some might interpret the presence of such debates between graduate students and faculty in the making of departmental decisions as a flaw in the process of pursuing the perfection toward which the Economics Department wasstriving—a necessary evil, perhaps, that detracted from any attained degree of perfection. But that flaw can also be regarded as a desirable and important part of the near-perfection achieved,
without which life in the Economics Department would be considerably less interesting, stimulating, and lively. Regardless, engaging in such debates was a significant portion of the process whereby faculty from the different paradigms learned to live together and, at least to some extent, to benefit from a cross-fertilization of ideas and academic interests.

It is also possible to identify what might be considered flaws that emerged in Departmental organization. First, the heartfelt differences on educational matters among faculty members and between some students and faculty made it necessary to spend long hours working out special procedures for the functioning of the Department. Thus the Economics Department was overadministered in the sense that it had to engage in certain activities (including negotiations as well as the activities that were required (p.22) as a consequence of the outcomes of those negotiations) to a degree that more typical departments would automatically avoid. Second, intense interactions among people with deep-seated and dissimilar views always has the potential to result in hurt feelings and disruptive behaviors generated by those feelings. Although Department members were generally quite sensitive to this problem and usually took great care to avoid it, there were times when conflicts arose that had to be dealt with. The presence of such flaws, of course, is a consequence of the humanness of our existence, and is one of the reasons why only near perfection, and not full perfection, can be achieved in reality.

Thus, from the mid 1970s to the mid 1980s, the University of Massachusetts Economics Department was home to a group of very bright and energetic scholars who, at the deepest philosophical level, raised fundamental questions about what constituted economics and how economics should be done. They searched for and, to some extent, found distinct, interesting, and sometimes exciting and provocative answers. That is priceless at a university and does not occur very often. Moreover, by its very nature, it is unlikely to last as the world and its priorities change and as a younger generation with different backgrounds and new curiosities replaces the older one.

But there are other levels on which the radical presence may be viewed and understood. The study of radical hires in Economics at the University of Massachusetts also brings into
focus the professional, academic, and personal relations that developed from a mixture of disparate intellectual disciplines in an important scholarly environment. In addition, the experiment in creating space for radical political economics that took place served, no doubt, objectives of academic freedom and a certain unfettered right of scholarly inquiry. In examining the unique history involved from those vantage points, a still further contribution may be made to some aspects of the sociology of knowledge. That field of study, of course, is primarily concerned with the ways in which human thought—in the present case academic scholarship—emanates from and is flavored by sociocultural contexts on one hand, and feeds back on social and cultural structures and experience on the other. In this regard, the significance of the University of Massachusetts experiment rests to a considerable extent on the fact that it provides an important case study of precisely those relations. Upon their arrival in the Economics Department (and to a lesser degree before), the radicals developed thought systems that had been parented by social and cultural events and concerns; and from the perspectives that informed their work and their scholarly contributions, they exerted influence on a variety of sociocultural phenomena. Thus, for example, and as will be set out in detail later, the civil rights and Vietnam War protest movements played an important role in the development of radical thought. And, as described earlier, the work of Bowles and Gintis on education had a significant impact on the relations between graduate students and faculty in the Economics Department.

Answers to the questions of how the group of radical economists at the University of Massachusetts was put together and why it was possible to do so are, as will be seen, remarkable enough. But the coming of the radicals to the University was preceded by the creation in the same Economics Department of a first-rate and important group of active neoclassical economists who were, in part, leaders in introducing mathematics and mathematical statistics into economics, generally, and in what was then the newly emerging more abstract field of mathematical economics. This latter group rose in an obscure faculty that had produced little in the way of published research over a long period of time, and did so in the brief space of two years. However, the group of neoclassical economists remained
intact for only two more years and, within two years of the
departure of its leaders, the vastly different group of radical
economists described earlier took their place. In the process of
replacement, some of the neoclassicals stayed on and several
new ones were brought in. It is rather unusual, of course, for
any department to be so successfully built and so successfully
reconstituted in such a striking way over such a short span of
time. In any case, the story of how the radicals came to the
University of Massachusetts and in so doing replaced a highly
regarded group of neoclassical economists, and how the
representatives of the four paradigms managed to overcome
many of their deep-seated differences to form a cohesive
department that achieved an unusual degree of near
perfection, is fascinating. In the words of L.S. Lifschultz,35

... the process ... [involved, in part,] a most unusual
series of events, exceptional within the traditions of
American academia for the unparalleled conflict which
developed and the clarity of academic principles which
finally emerged. The web of events ... [included two]
attempt[s] to fire a popular teacher, ... forceful student
protest[s], the resignation of two consecutive
Department chairmen, ... the assumption of
Departmental authority by a dean of the University, and
the unprecedented appointment of five radical
economists.

The full story will be told in some detail on the following
pages, and a time line of major events appears in Appendix A.
But before (p.25) turning to the story itself, it is first
necessary to consider the historical background that sets the
stage for the radical presence. That background includes the
evolution of the University of Massachusetts as a university
with an environment in which a significant number of radical
economists could be hired and prosper; the civil rights and the
Vietnam War protest movements that contributed to the
university's radical-friendly environment and spawned many
radical scholars in general and radical economists in
particular; the rise and fall of the economics profession in the
public mind and the profession's marginalization of those,
including the radicals, who would not confine their attention
to the narrow lines of thought approved by the economics
establishment; and the development of the Economics
Department on the Amherst campus of the University of Massachusetts as a significant force within the neoclassical paradigm of that establishment.  (p.26)

Notes:


(2.) Ibid., p. xxvii.


(6.) Ibid., p. 7.

(7.) Ibid., p. 18.

(8.) Ibid., p. 10.

(9.) Ibid., pp. 33–34.

(10.) Ibid., p. 42.


(12.) Ibid., p. 170.


(14.) For a more complete summary of Kuhn’s argument than that presented here see J. Eatwell, et al, eds., The New Palgrave, v. 3 (London: Macmillan, 1987), pp. 795–796. The following presentation is drawn from this material.

(15.) The word paradigm is often taken to have a broader meaning than that implied in this context. But because the Economics Department and its faculty used that expression in the narrow sense of identifying the different approaches set out later, it is historically correct to employ the word here.
(16.) It should be noted, however, that Kindahl was an empirical economist who had little interest in economic theory per se.

(17.) Because inequality and imperialism were considered by radical political economists to be breakdowns of the economic order, radical political economics could be viewed as an example in a different context of J.M. Keynes’ response to the malfunctioning of the economy as a whole. See his *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (London: Macmillan, 1936).


(20.) This usage of the term “political economy” should not be confused with that employed at the inception of economics as an independent discipline (recall p. 1 earlier). See also, for example, P. Arestis and M. Sawyer, eds., op. cit., p. xii.


(25.) A more detailed statement of the philosophical and methodological aspects of this paradigm, and the material from which the following summary is, in part, drawn, may be found in D.W. Katzner, *Time, Ignorance, and Uncertainty in Economic Models* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), pp. 18–24.


(28.) From here on, the phrase “at Amherst” is often dropped from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst for expositional convenience.

(29.) The graduate students had come to the University of Massachusetts to study radical political economy, not traditional economics.

(30.) The reason the questions of existence, uniqueness, and stability of equilibria are of vital importance to economists is that the notion of equilibrium provides, in many circumstances, the only link between the economist's explanation of what is going on and the actual thing that is being explained. See D.W. Katzner, *An Introduction to the Economic Theory of Market Behavior: Microeconomics from a Walrasian Perspective* (Cheltenham: Elgar, 2006), pp. 21–22, 336–338, 381–383.


(32.) Ibid., 228.


(34.) Later on, after mathematics had infiltrated much of economic analysis, mathematical economics ceased to exist as a distinct field and the standard fields like microeconomic theory maintained their identity as fields but with heavy use of mathematics.
