

Foreword

This is a book about both economics and philosophy. It should be read by both economists and philosophers. As Serge-Christophe Kolm himself writes on page 38, “the association of economics and philosophy . . . is not only a laudable (and probably too rare) aspect of scholarship: it is . . . simply unavoidable for making sense and progress”. Indeed, he argues that we should make no distinction between the two fields.

This is a book about a book: Kolm’s *Macrojustice*, published in 2005. In philosophy, it is common for there to be books about books. In economics, it is rare. In part, this is because economists write books less frequently, and books play a smaller role in the economics profession. This is, in my view, much to be regretted. Original ideas in economics today are communicated scientifically through peer-reviewed journal articles. This is in many respects an admirable format, but in my view it has serious limitations. The analysis has to be presented in a circumscribed form, often without a full exploration of the underlying assumptions. Within the compass of an article, it is not usually possible to draw out the inter-connections with other branches of the literature or with other disciplines.

In writing a book, an author has both the opportunity and the challenge of presenting ideas on a broader canvas. This challenge is one to which Serge-Christophe Kolm and the authors of this volume have risen magnificently. *Macrojustice* is a tour de force, giving centre place to the concept of “equal labour income equalization” (first developed by Kolm many years ago) and demonstrating its power and reach. The present volume brings together the author of *Macrojustice* and some of its “first and most attentive readers” in a highly productive interchange, which is essential complementary reading.

In part, the absence of this kind of volume in economics reflects the fact that today’s economists are less likely to read books. This brings me to a central issue. I have said that the book *should* be read by economists, but how can this be ensured? It is not just the format but also the subject matter that is unfashionable. As an undergraduate, I studied courses on

“welfare economics”, whose dull treatment of issues such as compensation tests would have been greatly enlivened by the present volume. But these courses are no longer taught, and the idea of economics as a “moral science” has been lost from sight. All that I can say is that the present volume offers a wonderful antidote. Every student should be required to read the Introduction. They will then be convinced as to why we should debate the theory of macrojustice.

*Tony Atkinson
Nuffield College
Oxford and London School of Economics*

On Kolm's Theory of Macrojustice
A Pluridisciplinary Forum of Exchange
Gamel, C.; Lubrano, M. (Eds.)
2011, XII, 370 p., Hardcover
ISBN: 978-3-540-78376-3