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The General Theory in Keynes's Biographies

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It may both be true that many things said by Keynes [in the General Theory] had been said, or could have been said, in the old terminology, and that his scheme has tempted its users into certain errors, and yet remain also true that, on the whole and on balance, his scheme is far superior

- Harrod (1951: 465)

I must remind the reader that the book is probably the least clear of Keynes's contribution to economics

- Moggridge (1992: 557)

There are many different ways of telling the story of the General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money, and many different stories to be told about it.

- Skidelsky (1992: 537)

Premise

It is perhaps fitting to mark the 70th anniversary of the General Theory (GT)\(^1\) with an assessment of what we have learned about this work from the vast research undertaken by three biographers of Keynes whose researches on his chapters and correspondence mark them out among scholars for their extraordinary scope and thoroughness. I will compare the analysis of the GT in Keynes's three major biographies (Harrod 1951; Moggridge 1992; Skidelsky 1992) in order to assess the views presented there on the genesis of the book, the development of its main ideas and the various "versions" which have been produced ever since. Once set in the context of Keynes's life, does the book prove more intelligible, and if so, in what respects? Can we detect different interpretations of its meaning and significance? On posing these questions and comparing these three biographers' approaches to the subject matter, one should bear in mind that Harrod holds a peculiar position among the three. On the one hand he knew Keynes and participated in the process which led to the General Theory (he was also one of the people Keynes entrusted the proofreading to), while on the other hand he could not have full command of the Keynes's chapters, most of which were still uncatalogued and unpublished when he set about writing the biography. Moggridge, of course, enjoyed a very different position since, in his capacity as editor of the Collected Writings of J. M. Keynes, he was responsible for much of dating and ordering of the relevant papers, letters and manuscripts. Skidelsky, on the other hand, while claiming that his purpose was to "rescue Keynes from the economists", dedicated considerably more pages to the GT than the other two biographers,\(^4\) although largely taken up with the reactions to the book and the criticism it came in for.

In comparing and assessing the biographers' narratives I divide my account into three sections: 1. Origin and purpose; 2. Development and influences and 3. Interpretations and controversies. In the final section I draw some conclusions.

1. Origin and purpose

All three biographers agree that the origin of the GT is to be found in Keynes's dissatisfaction with his Treatise on Money, coupled with an urge to find remedies to the worldwide high level of unemployment. However, they stress different aspects in the scenario against which the book is set and should be placed.

Harrod draws attention to the readership the book targeted: "His aim ... was to convert his professional colleagues. He judged that a direct appeal to the people would be in vain, unless it could be reinforced by the majority of economists speaking with one voice" (Harrod 1951: 461). In this respect, the GT is presented as a work of persuasion, like many others by Keynes, but with a particular public in mind. Harrod's characterization is indeed borne out by Keynes's warnings in the final pages of the book against being "slaves of some defunct economist" or the danger of "gradual encroachment of ideas" (CWK VII: 383).

Who were the "professional colleagues" he was intent on converting? Certainly D. H. Robertson and F. A. Hayek, who - if judged against their review of the Treatise on Money - had proved to him that they "had not in the least understood what he had tried to say" (Harrod 1951: 435), but also A. C. Pigou, L. Robbins and H. Henderson, the professional
economists, the representatives of "sound principles" (Mini 1996: 331) with whom Keynes was in constant contact.

According to Harrod the support Keynes was receiving from his closest (and younger) colleagues, R. F. Kahn and J. Robinson, sharpened the contrast with the economists who failed to see what he was getting at, despite his efforts to impress his meaning on them. Perhaps after all they were hardly to be blamed, one could argue, since he was breaking new ground and "raising a dust" (CWK XIII: 548). We know that Harrod, too, from the very outset, when the writing of the GT was still being written, was very critical of Keynes's insistence on emphasizing differences between his approach and what he labelled "classical thought". In his biography he volunteers an explanation of Keynes's irreverence towards the established view, as a psychological reaction "to the frustrations he had felt, and was still feeling, as the result of the persistent tendency to ignore what was novel in his contribution" (Harrod 1951: 451).

By "classics" Keynes meant the tradition stemming from Marshall, including that inheritance from British Political Economy which had been filtered into it; this tradition was embodied in the work and teaching of Pigou and Robertson and most of Keynes's colleagues at his Faculty in Cambridge. Keynes was exposed to the views of his fellow economists also in his capacity as editor of the Economic Journal, Secretary of the Royal Economic Society and in his multifarious academic and non-academic endeavours. Most aptly it has been said that Keynes was an educator. His classroom was England and the world, and his tools were the newspaper article, the pamphlet, the letter to The Times, the radio broadcast, the committee testimony and, occasionally, the technical books and journal articles addressed to economists. In pursuit of this mission, he gained knowledge by participating in economic committees, by questioning those in authority, by partying and conferring with statesmen, bankers, politicians and those "in the know".

(Mini 1995: 49)

He was well acquainted with the ethos of the profession and in disagreement with most of it, especially in the late 1920s and early 1930 when important issues, such as rationalization of the cotton industry, trade and exchange rate policy and remedies for unemployment were being debated. He censured the majority of the economic profession for their inability to change habits of mind which, when added to the "habits and instincts of the ordinary man, bred into him for countless generations" (CWK IX: 327), made engagement in experiments conducive to practical results even more difficult.

Economists did not enjoy top ranking in Keynes's scale of values and appreciation, but to persuade them he had to meet them on their own ground. The sense of frustration Keynes was experiencing is borne out in many instances during the drafting of the GT and in the aftermath, offering some support for Harrod's interpretation. A famous letter to Lydia, in October 1933, gives us a glimpse into Keynes's state of chagrin: "Are all the economists mad except Alexander [R. F. Kahn] and me? It seems to me so, yet it can't be true" (quoted in Moggridge 1992: 566).

For his part, Skidelsky insists on another of Keynes's main concerns, namely the threat facing civilization, i.e. freedom and democracy, with the rise of the two totalitarianisms of the 1930s: "The General Theory was projected against the background not just of the world depression, but of its political and social repercussions: specifically, the spread of communism and fascism" (Skidelsky 1992: 440). There is no doubt that in the 1930s Keynes was shocked at the discovery that many of his friends were turning to Marx, and that on many occasions he voiced his aversion to Marx and his economic theory. His opposition to fascism is equally beyond question; the Preface to the German edition of the GT cannot be interpreted as implicit support of the Nazi economic experiment (Schefold 1980). Still, it is difficult to assess how strongly he felt the seriousness of the threat and to what extent he was devoting to getting through to a readership that was politically committed to a totalitarian creed.

Certainly, in the book he praised the advantages and virtues of capitalist individualism: "The authoritarian state system of today seem to solve the problem of unemployment at the expense of efficiency and of freedom... It may be possible by a right analysis of the problem to cure the disease whilst preserving efficiency and freedom" (CWK VII: 381). However there are passages in which individualism is portrayed as the culprit of many failures in market economies, so perhaps it was in the realm of economic, moral and civil liberties, that Keynes was pursuing his agenda, in many respects at variance with traditional liberal stances (see Dostaller 1998; Vercelli 2010). The threat was not only the dangers of advancing totalitarianisms, but also those deriving from excessive much reliance on the market system. While Keynesian policies are wrongly characterized as synonymous with government intervention,
his cure of "socializing investment" to sustain aggregate demand can rightly be adduced as evidence of his mistrust of market mechanisms (Bateman 2006). How much anti-liberal politics and how much anti laissez-faire economics is behind the GT is perhaps still an open question.

Moggridge, on the other hand, draws attention to Keynes's deep dislike of those premises in economics which are found out to be false or ill-conceived: "[his] emphasis on assumptions or premises also provides a large part of the explanation of why he abandoned his Treatise on Money so quickly" (Moggridge 1992: 555). Indeed many instances can be found in the GT of Keynes's argumentative logic against "the classical theory" based on the accusation of holding "tacit assumptions [that] are seldom or never satisfied" (CWK VII: 378) such as the "illicit assumption" that "the wage bargain determines the real wage" (ibid.: 13) or their "fallaciously supposing" that an act of individual saving leads to an act of investment (ibid.: 21). This aversion to false premises applied to his own theory as well, and this may explain why Keynes was at times found to be inconsistent with his previously held views.

What, then, was so wrong with the assumptions of the Treatise that Keynes, within a year of its publication, felt he had to abandon them? I have argued elsewhere (Marcuzzo 2002) that basically he had misgivings about the Fundamental Equations, i.e. the assumption independence of the price level of consumption goods from that of investment goods, which came under fire both from his opponents (Pigou and Robertson) and from his closer associates (Kahn and Sraffa). However, astonishing as his readiness was to accept the need to revise his assumptions (and eventually to discard the Fundamental Equations), in the end he could not resist presenting his new book as a "natural evolution" in his line of thought (CWK VII: xxii).

He laboured to make his former approach appear compatible with the latter and was always careful to indicate where exactly his new argument departed from the old. First, there was the change in the definition of income (ibid.: 61); second, there was a new mechanism for output adjustment (ibid.: 77); and third there was determination of the equilibrium level of output at less than full employment (ibid.: 77–8). Thus, reinterpreting his former approach based on the Fundamental Equations in the light of the latter, based on Effective Demand, Keynes claimed to have established compatibility between his two books (see Marcuzzo 2003). Moggridge argues that "one should accept Keynes's retrospective account of how he came to his conclusions" (Moggridge 1992: 559). However I feel that in the case of these two books he was stretching the continuity of his approach a bit too far.

2. Development and influences

Thanks to his editorship of Keynes's Collected Writings, Moggridge was better placed to provide the most detailed account of the development of Keynes's ideas towards the GT and trace out the stages through which concepts and argument took various forms and final shape. His narrative is extremely accurate and well grounded on evidence coming from drafts, correspondence, table of contents and lecture notes, only a part of which is published in vols. XIII and XIX of the Collected Writings. There are alternative reconstructions – as found in the literature (see Patinkin 1973, 1996) – but Moggridge's is to be considered the benchmark chronology.

The five years spanning from the publication of the Treatise to that of the General Theory, can be divided into three time-legs. The first dates from comments and criticism on the Treatise (autumn 1930) to the early material for the new book and lectures (spring 1932). The second spans from the Easter Term 1932 lectures, which were attended by members of the "Circus", to the summer 1933, when the writing of the new book was well under way. The final stage runs from the 1933 Michaelmas Term lectures and the contemporary fragments of versions of the GT, when the principle of effective demand was clearly expounded, to the final touches to the proofs in December 1935.

Disagreement among scholars about the development of Keynes's ideas towards the GT can be grouped into two headings, namely the list of steps leading to it and the evidence agreed upon to support it. Perhaps the issue which has attracted more attention is when Keynes arrived at the formulation of the principle of effective demand. Most commentators (Dimand 1988: 167; Moggridge 1992: 562; Patinkin 1993: 656) agree that by Michaelmas term 1933 the conception of effective demand had been accomplished; more disputed is whether the supporting argument, namely that a change in investment causes a change in saving, was present even in the 1932 drafts. For instance, Moggridge's dating of these fragments was questioned by Patinkin (1975, 1993) on the grounds that description of the equilibrating role of changes in output does not appear in the November 1932 lecture notes (Rymes 1989).

I have argued elsewhere (Marcuzzo 2002) that I have not found enough evidence to support Patinkin's claim.
Skiddelsky’s account follows the same line as Moggridge’s, but he makes an important methodological point in passing:

[the] scholarly obsession with timetabling the flow of intellectual invention…also reflects an agenda which is not historiographical or methodological. Involved are the linked questions of the relative value of Treatise and the General Theory and the whole corpus of Keynes’s writings; the relationship between Keynes’s work and that of the that of the other monetary economists of his day; and what the “main point” of the General Theory was.

(Skiddelsky 1992: 444–5)

In fact when it comes to tracing out the influence of his fellow economists in the process which led Keynes toward the GT, nuances in the accepted chronology become marked historiographical differences. Skiddelsky, like Harrod, plays down the importance of the Circus and gives more credit to Kahn and Hawtrey. Moggridge, on the contrary, takes the view that:

Kahn certainly deserves Keynes’s glowing acknowledgement in the Preface to the General Theory. Yet the surviving materials show that Keynes was in control. He chose the destination and the main route. His colleagues and collaborators tried to keep him from unnecessary logs, and to improve his sketch map for his successors—but not always successfully.

(Moggridge 1992: 569–70)

Harrod’s narrative is intertwined with autobiographic threads, since he was directly involved in the process of commenting on the GT, from the early stages through the proofs. “My main endeavour” – he claims – “was to mitigate his attack on the ‘classical’ school…[In particular] in regard to his allegation that the traditional theory of interest did not make sense” (Harrod 1951: 453). In the biography he defends the point which he had made at the time, namely that Keynes was “in some confusion about what the classical position really was” and that he claimed “for his definition of the marginal efficiency of capital more originality than can be accorded to it” (ibid.).

There are two questions here. The first is how accurately the biographer – who happens to be contemporary with his subject – is able to recount the process of development of ideas at the time and to assess the nature of his own contribution; the second is whether his argument about Keynes’s theory of interest rate stands up to criticism. On these two issues the literature provides us with a good deal of evidence. Daniele Besomi has convincingly argued that Harrod’s role as commentator upon the GT in the making, if judged against the extant correspondence, shows that “at several crucial stages in the evolution of Keynes’s thought Harrod was unaware of the developments taking place” (Besomi 2005: 92). Moreover the exchange they had between June and September 1935 on the proofs “bear witness to the incompatibility of their viewpoints” (Ibid.: 98), both in terms of methodology and substantive issues.

On the question of the rate of interest, there is no agreement in the literature as to whether Keynes had entirely freed himself from the basic marginalist ideas about the decreasing ordering of investment projects because of diminishing returns and the inverse relationship between investment and interest rate. It seems to me that Harrod acknowledges “the importance of expectations in this connection” (Harrod 1951: 453), but he misses Keynes’s point about the “conventional” nature of the interest rate which qualifies it as a monetary phenomenon, unlike the classical theory which anchors it to the productivity of capital.

Moggridge does not address this issue – simply noting that by 1933 Keynes “had the glimmerings of the marginal efficiency of capital, as distinguished from marginal productivity of capital” (Moggridge 1992: 561); Skiddelsky devotes quite a few pages to the topic, concluding that “The fundamental unity between Keynes’s liquidity-preference theory of interest and the rest of his ideas in the General Theory lies at the instinctive, or visionary level” (1992: 563). Thus, against conceptual difficulties, interpretation of the theory shifts towards interpretation of the man, which is not an uncommon outcome in biographies.

3. Interpretations and controversies

The underlying ambition which I found common to Harrod, Moggridge and Skiddelsky (and perhaps to any biographer) is to find a key to Keynes’s mind and understand how it worked. In doing so they came to stress different qualities of his intellect and personality both in general and in the GT in particular.

Harrod’s point is Keynes’s consistency. “I detect” – he wrote – “a most remarkable consistency in the development of his theories and practical proposals, from his early studies in the Indian currency to the General Theory” (1951: 467). Consistency here is seen as a feature of Keynes ever ready to change ideas, in the pursuit of truth, to open up new paths, to give himself up to new discoveries. Many words are spent defending
Keynes from the charge of being inconsistent throughout his work and in his policy promoting. Moreover, Harrod seems to be interpreting consistency as continuity, thus embracing the thesis which lately has gained a lot of favour in the literature (see Davis 1994), when he states that “the careful student is able to trace a natural evolution of ideas from his early writings to the great system set out in the General Theory”. No clues, however, are given to the reader about the elements which could be brought in to confirm or disconfirm the “continuity” thesis.

Moggridge lays great emphasis on Keynes’s intuition in general, and specifically on working out the GT: “in the development of particular idea for the General Theory it is clear that he had intuitively grasped the essentials of many of them quite early” (Moggridge 1992: 552). Moggridge insists that for Keynes “intuition ran ahead of analysis”, and that for him economics required “appeal to intuitions”, not proofs as in mathematics, alluding here to the wider issue of the methodological differences in natural and moral sciences to which Keynes attached great importance.

In the same vein, but in a slightly different sense, Skidelsky points out to the artistic aspect of Keynes, in particular as far as the GT is concerned; he described it as “as work of art and imagination as well as economic logic […] an invitation to thought rather than a machine for solving crises” (1992: 538).

These differences in characterizing Keynes’s intellect add to their shared belief that the driving force behind it was an urge to persuade and a deep involvement in policy-making.10 In a related chapter (Marcuzzo 2008) I examined the central role of persuasion in Keynes’s work as a means to change the environment within which individuals operate – so that moral and rational motives become the spring of action of the collectivity as a whole – and to induce behaviour to conform to goals that were attainable only by moving beyond individualistic motivation or utilitarian calculation. As Samuel Brittan aptly noted, Keynes “never lost hope that morality and persuasion of ideas could be relied upon to disseminate enlightened thinking after, at worst, a lag of generation” (2006: 182).

There is no doubt that the GT is better portrayed as a study in persuasion rather than in policy making, offering a set of recipes or rules to be followed in all circumstances. Skidelsky warns against the dangers of “reading off Keynesian policy prescriptions from a single book” (1992: 319) and in particular the misreading of the GT as a eulogy of fiscal policy. He argues, however, that notwithstanding Keynes’s own resistance to “premature formalisation of his theory […] the reduction of theory to model was inseparable from its triumph as a tool of policy” (ibid.: 548).

Harrod’s viewpoint on the role of models in economics was very far from Keynes’s, as is borne out by the exchange they had on this matter (see Besomi 2005). He does not attempt to present the main propositions of the GT in model-like form and mentions only in passing that at the time he had “supplied a diagram purporting to reconcile the classical theory with [Keynes’s] theory” (Harrod 1951: 453). In a footnote, however, he mentions his Econometrica article (Harrod 1937) said to be “a summary account of the doctrines of the General Theory, for consideration by professional economists” (Ibid.).

Moggridge takes pains to present Keynes as not putting “great faith in the simple-minded application of ideas from particular models” (Moggridge 554), but does not commit himself to any “interpretation” of the GT, thereby coming in for criticism from some reviewers (see Blaug 1994; Dimand 1993). We have, however, other sources to evaluate his position. Unlike the case of Harrod, with whom Moggridge in very few cases disagrees over matters of facts and interpretation – apart from the trenchant line in a footnote referring to “Harrod’s general attempt to make Keynes’s views conform with it” (1992: 573n) – he took issue with the way in which Skidelsky dealt with many aspects of Keynes’s life and work in general and the GT in particular (Moggridge 2002a, 2002b). The verdict is clear-cut: “Skidelsky’s treatment of the General Theory is post-Keynesian” and shows “a lack of engagement with the literature on nineteenth-century economics” (2002a: 640, 642). Keynes – in Moggridge’s view – was disposed to accept the formalization of his theory “in terms of a simple three-equation, two identity model” as formulated on more or less similar lines by Hicks, Lange, Reddaway, Champernowne, Harrod, Meade and Lerner (ibid.: 641). This assertion has him siding more with Harrod than with the Post-Keynesians (and Kahn and Joan Robinson for that matter) in not rescuing the GT from its subsequent developments.

Finally, Moggridge claims that “Skidelsky has been overly preoccupied” (ibid.: 653) with Harrod’s biography, implying perhaps that he was not preoccupied with his. In fact there are not many “Moggridge” entries in the index to the three volumes by Skidelsky and I am not aware that Skidelsky responded to Moggridge’s criticism of his trilogy. On the contrary, an entire section in the last chapter of the third volume by Skidelsky (2000) is devoted to Harrod’s biography and how it was received at the time of its publication, with no comments, unfortunately, on Harrod’s analysis of the GT.
Some concluding remarks

We have seen that there are many layers in the readings of the GT by Keynes's biographers, to which one could also add the various assessments their accounts were received in the literature. All three biographies prompted a great many reviews by professional economists and historians, who naturally had critical remarks to make on some aspects of them. Pollard (1994: 140-1) rightly points to the different evaluation of the Treatise on Money vis-à-vis the GT in Skidelsky and Moggridge; while the former maintains that Keynes's "classical achievement" is the 1930 book, the latter gives the highest marks to the 1936 book. Laidler (2002: 102) argues that "Skidelsky manages to place more emphasis on the heterodox element in Keynes's economic thought than the overall record perhaps justifies". Dimand (1993: 996) criticizes both Skidelsky and Moggridge for not making "proper use" of Rymes (1989) as "rich source of insights into the writings of the General Theory", and argues that in general Keynes's most important book is not given the full treatment it deserves in Moggridge's biography. Also Blaug (1994: 1210) observes that, surprisingly, Moggridge "declines to enter into a discussion of the what-Keynes-really meant literature". Harcourt and Turnell (2005: 4937), on the other hand, with reference to Skidelsky, claim that "Readers with little or no prior knowledge of why the General Theory was so significant [...] will go away with a clear idea of its momentous importance and impact at the time it was written."

It seems to me that, having compared the accounts of the GT in these three biographies, we may conclude that they differ in some important aspects. The first is what we can term their biographical style. Moggridge is the professional historian of economic thought who is looking for evidence, context, dating and, as it were, steps back from the tasks of both textual exegesis and modelling. Skidelsky is more engaged in producing a narrative which is historically accurate, but which also digs into the personality of his author, searching for clues to access his inner feelings, motivations and even unconscious drives. Harrod is the "official" biographer, mindful of the responsibility of portraying his author according to the sensibility of his time, but he is also the affectionate admirer of the master who was his contemporary. The second aspect is what we can call their expertise, or even comparative advantage, in approaching the subject. Moggridge is the professional historian of economic thought, knowledgeable about facts, circumstances and people, who set up the necessary framework to place the GT within the development of economics as a discipline. Harrod is the economist, engaged in his own research program which differed in scope and content from Keynes's, who is trying to convey the GT to a general public, but bearing also in mind the professional reader. Skidelsky is the historian with a superb command in story-telling, very versed in twentieth-century British culture, who is attempting to give his readers a summary of the book, taking care of its enduring fascination, the reactions it prompted and the controversies it still produces.

It would be vain to conclude this comparison by giving marks to each of the biographers in the attempt to establish which of them best performed the task of presenting the GT both to the practitioner of the subject and to the layman. In an article of some years ago Gerrard (1991: 286) argued that we should not be "worrying about the multiple interpretations" of the GT since its continuing achievement consists precisely in the "ability to generate a diversity of research program". Similarly, perhaps, we should have no worries about being confronted with further attempts to frame the GT within the life of John Maynard Keynes as long as new material is brought to the fore. Changing readings of the General Theory have always been monitored in the professional literature (see recently Dimand 2009) either by reinstating what was believed to be its true meaning and message, or by denouncing its supposed failures and misgivings (see Le Vey 2004). The contribution of biographers - to place the book in its context, both in the life of Keynes and in his times - is not a minor task of scholarship, although not exhaustive. This should also be kept under scrutiny, to monitor what needs to be discarded or abandoned in their accounts. In the future additional evidence from various people's papers, correspondence and manuscripts may turn up, supporting or disproving the present historical reconstructions; in history, as in science, there are no results that cannot in principle be revised.

The layers of interpretation of the book — the original text, Keynes's own account, the biographer's story, and the heaps of reviews assessing them all — thus make appraisal of it on the occasion of the 70th year since publication a complicated, but no less intriguing and enticing undertaking.

Notes

1. In 2006 a number of events were held to celebrate the anniversary of the General Theory and commemorate Keynes's death ten years later; this burst of activity took a heavy toll on scholars who had perhaps too readily accepted the invitation to take part in them, untroubled by the danger of repetitions and overlapping in what they had to say. This was certainly my case, as I later
discovered that by taking part in these celebrations I had committed myself to writing 3 chapters on Keynes in a very short period of time. I have tried my best to make this chapter a complement to rather than a substitute for the other two companion pieces (Marcuzzo 2006, 2008).

2. In Moggbride the GT is covered in two chapters amounting to 53 pages, while the two chapters devoted to it in Skidelsky come to 87 pages.

3. See Keynes’s often quoted remark: “The study of economics does not seem to require any specialised gifts of an unusually high order. Is it not, intellectually regarded, a very easy subject compared with the higher branch of philosophy and pure science? Yes good, or even competent, economists are the rarest of birds. An easy subject at which very few excel” (CWK X: 173).

4. See for instance what he wrote in 1933: “The decadent international but individualistic capitalism, in the hands of which we found ourselves after the War, is not a success. It is not intelligent, it is not beautiful, it is not just, it is not virtuous – and it doesn’t deliver the goods” (CWK XXI: 239).

5. “In the writing of the book itself, his main pillar of support was Mr. Richard Kahn” (Harrod 1951: 451).

6. “Despite much ‘pooled memory’ to the contrary, the Circus seems to have played a relatively minor part in the development of the General Theory [...] the most important effect of the Circus discussion was to reinforce the impetus Hawtrey gave Keynes to working out a short-period theory of output [...] much more important than Circus’s collective contribution to Keynes’s progress was Kahn’s personal contribution” (Skidelsky 1992: 447).

7. One reviewer of Harrod’s biography acutely remarked that one has “to disentangle three things: (1) Harrod’s account of Keynes’s economics; Harrod’s own recent economics; and Keynes account of Keynes’s economics” (Wright 1952: 392).

8. Pasinetti (1977: 60) argues that the ordering of investment projects cannot be assimilated to the marginal reasoning of neoclassical vintage, being closer to the Ricardian principles of ordering of land on the basis of degree of fertility; on the contrary Bonifati and Vianello (1998: 103) argue that Keynes remains faithful to the marginalist tradition according to which as the rate of interest decreases more capital-intensive production processes are adopted as an effect of the “scarcity” principle.

9. “There is little doubt that he would not have rested content in the position that he had achieved in 1935 anymore than Ricardo, whose mind was also continually moving forward, would have rested content with the last edition of the Principles” (Harrod 1951: 473).

10. “Keynes was passionately concerned with policy; so were most of those who took up the General Theory” (Skidelsky 1992: 617).

11. For a very recent one see Dostaller (2007).

References


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