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Introduction to the Special Issue

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The word *heterodox* has been used within the institutionalist literature since the 1930s to signify approaches to economic analysis that stand in some form of dissent relative to neoclassical economics. In the late 1960s, the term began to acquire a broader meaning, so that by the 1990s it encompassed heterodoxy as opposition to neoclassical economics, heterodoxy as a shared outlook about how economic analysis should be conducted, and heterodoxy as a viable alternative to neoclassical economics. Hence, heterodox economics has a threefold meaning. First, it refers to a collection of approaches that stand in some significant degree in opposition to mainstream theory, including Austrian, feminist, institutional-evolutionary, Marxian-radical, post-Keynesian, and social economics. Second, it refers to a community of economists who engage in professional and scientific discourse with one another across the different heterodox approaches. And, finally, heterodox economics refers to the development of a set of theoretical alternatives to mainstream economics that draw on the different heterodox approaches.

This special issue of the *RRPE* is concerned with the history of heterodox economics, by which we mean the intellectual history of the various heterodox approaches and the social, institutional, and organizational developments that comprise the history of the community of heterodox economists; and it is special in a very important way. Historians of economics have tended to approach the history of heterodox economics as a collection of disparate episodes. This treatment suppresses the significance of heterodox economics, whose interest is thereby reduced to how it stands in relation to the dominant narrative of mainstream economics. Furthermore, this episodic outlook undervalues and discourages research on historical linkages among heterodox approaches. Marxism-radicalism, institutionalism, post-Keynesianism, and feminist economics each appears as a self-contained theoretical episode. The economists who populate the episodes are treated as though they have no history, are confined to the particular episode they shaped, and disappear when the episode ends. And the social networks that comprise the community of heterodox economists are regarded as uninteresting because they have no long-term impact on mainstream economics. By devoting a special issue to the history of heterodox economics, the *RRPE* is rejecting this sort of tunnel vision.

The contributions to this issue view history as an analytical narrative that aims to make sense of the academic lives, social activities, and theoretical endeavors of heterodox economists. Such an approach to writing history is incompatible with the postmodernist approach, as argued in Stavros Mavroudeas's article. Thus, the writing of heterodox history requires knowledge of the social networks and subjective perspectives of the individuals

who shaped a particular analytical tradition. But these connections and subjectivities are not transparent, and often can be uncovered only through life histories, such as Howard Sherman's autobiographical article on the making of a radical economist and Frank Stilwell's article on the struggle for political economy at the University of Sydney. The academic lives of most heterodox economists are centered on the university departments at which they work. To penetrate and understand these lives often requires exploration of departmental histories, and Stilwell's article does an admirable job in this respect. Finally, the scientific endeavors of heterodox economists can be made intelligible through intellectual histories. These might deal with the evolution of a particular idea or theory throughout time, as in Matias Vernengo's article on dependency theory in the context of Latin American political economy, Jonathan Goldstein's article on the Marxian microfoundation project, and Fabian Tarrit's article on the history of analytical Marxism; or with the ideas and arguments of specific heterodox economists, such as Guido Preparata's article on Rudolf Steiner.

The articles contained in this special issue collectively represent an important first step that we hope will be followed by other efforts, for if we do not write our history, no one else will. The Special Issue Collective thanks the authors, the Editorial Board, the reviewers, and Managing Editor Hazel Dayton Gunn for their participation, advice, and support.

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special issue collective:
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