

Abstract

mgr Krzysztof Turek

This doctoral dissertation analyzes the "reconciliation problem," which was initiated by the contradiction between the assumptions of welfare economics and the findings of behavioral economics. This conflict stems from the fact that behavioral findings undermine the key assumption of the so-called "new welfare economics" regarding the rationality and consistency of human preferences, which were presumed to be observable in choices. The aim of this work is to analyze and systematize the contemporary debate on this topic by situating it within a broader, historical-methodological context.

The dissertation presents and critically analyzes four main positions in the debate: behavioral welfare economics, the concept of opportunity as mutual advantage (R. Sugden), the instrumentalist approach, and the identity approach. The key analytical tool is the author's own reconstruction of the historical debate on the relationship between positive economics, normative economics, and the art of economics. Based on this, three distinct methodological traditions are identified: methodological nominalism (J.S. Mill/J.N. Keynes), pragmatic realism (A. Marshall/A.C. Pigou), and positivistic physicalism (L. Walras/V. Pareto).

The dissertation argues that the "reconciliation problem" is a result of the influence of the positivistic physicalism tradition on welfare economics. Within this tradition, the goal was to create a theory of welfare free from ethical judgments, pursued in the manner of the natural sciences. Within the other methodological traditions, this problem does not occur in such an acute form, or does not appear at all. The work demonstrates that the emergence of the reconciliation problem is a further argument showing that the methodology of positivistic physicalism is unsuitable for the goals that welfare economics sets for itself.

In conclusion, the author argues that the most coherent framework for integrating the contributions of behavioral economics with welfare economics is offered by the perspective of pragmatic realism. In this view, the "reconciliation problem" is not perceived as a theoretical crisis, but rather as a natural and desirable process of adaptation for economics as a practical science, which, in response to new empirical knowledge, must revise its normative criteria and recommendations.