

Title: Thinking about economic discourse: modernism and post-modernism as epistemes

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Abstract

The method and the discursive practices of economists have been studied from two basic perspectives: by the reference to the contributions of philosophy of science, or through research developed from the perspectives of analytical philosophy and rhetoric. In this paper it is emphasized the singularity and radical character of another way of thinking economics, one based on the work of Michel Foucault. In this kind of approach the discourse is evaluated as belonging to different epistemic matrices. Before some methodological, linguistic or rhetorical dispositions are established, an even more basic guiding thread is unfolded, one which defines the conditions that make possible knowledge in a certain historic and cultural context. The aim here is to, departing from the notions of representation, history and finitude, discern the components of the two great historical transformations related to the discourse and their impact on what is being done in economics. First, the main elements of the "modern" discourse are identified in the economics according the archaeology of this science proposed by Foucault. Second, the main elements of a new episteme that modifies the conception of what is a valid discourse are pointed out. It must be kept in mind that, although for Foucault we still are in the modern episteme, there are mutabilities in its core that allow to glimpse the arising of a new epistemic configuration. He pointed out some of them and the understanding of their repercussions is crucial to evaluate the current statute of economic discourse.

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