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THEORIES

The Formative Period

GEORGE J. STIGLER

New York · 1946

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY



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WRITTEN FOR INCLUSION IN MAGAZINE OR NEWSPAPER

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Published March, 1941. Reprinted October, 1946

Preface

THESE studies are designed to fill in part an evident and important gap in the literature of economics: the development of the modern theory of production and distribution. The existence of a need for studies of this development is demonstrated in the introductory chapter; the importance of the subject matter and period will be obvious to the professional students of economics to whom this volume is addressed.

The scope and frame of reference of these studies is also discussed in the introductory chapter. I would, however, anticipate one point which is there made. The present studies are critical,—I am resigned to having some readers characterize them as hypercritical. But I hope no one will make the gratuitous inference either that these essays are comprehensive enough to serve as an adequate basis for a complete appraisal of the work of any economist here studied, or that it is any reflection on an economist of the last generation not to have known all of the technical economic analysis which is now at our disposal. For the general critical attitude, however, I rest my case on the fact that (in the words of Max Weber), "Lack of conviction has no inner connection with scientific objectivity."

This work was first completed in 1937 as a doctoral dissertation, which was submitted early in 1938 to the University of Chicago. It has since been revised and a chapter on John Bates Clark has been added.

The dissertation topic was first suggested to me by Professor Frank H. Knight, and it was subsequently written under his supervision. My debt to him cannot possibly be expressed in adequate terms: his advice and

criticism have been offered with the greatest generosity at every stage in the writing of this volume, and they have been indispensable in bringing the analysis up to whatever level it has attained.

I wish also to express appreciation for very material assistance received from Professor Jacob Viner and from Professor J. M. Clark of Columbia University. I am indebted to Professor William Jaffé of Northwestern University and to the late Professor Henry Schultz of the University of Chicago for access to the unpublished correspondence of Walras. Professor Gerhard Tintner of Iowa State College has caught several slips, and Mr. Alexander Hart of the University of Minnesota has called numerous others to my attention.

It seems always necessary to add, however, that I alone am responsible for the errors of commission and omission which (like death and taxes) insist on making their unwelcome appearance.

GEORGE J. STIGLER

MINNEAPOLIS, MINN.
February, 1941

Table of Contents

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. WILLIAM STANLEY JEVONS ✓	13
III. PHILIP H. WICKSTEED	38
IV. ALFRED MARSHALL ✓	61
V. FRANCIS Y. EDGEWORTH ✓	108
VI. CARL MENGER ✓	134
VII. FRIEDERICH VON WIESER ✓	158
VIII. EUGEN VON BÖHM-BAWERK ✓	179
IX. LEON WALRAS ✓	228
X. KNUT WICKSELL ✓	261
XI. JOHN BATES CLARK ✓	296
XII. EULER'S THEOREM AND THE MARGINAL PRO- DUCTIVITY THEORY ✓	320
INDEX	389

