

NICHOLAS GEORGESCU-ROEGEN AND THE METHODOLOGY OF ECONOMIC SCIENCE

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THE main purpose of this paper is to examine important methodological issues relating to scientific investigations and in particular, investigations in social sciences with economics receiving the priority treatment. The point of departure in this regard has been the philosophy of Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen elaborated mainly in his 'The Entropy Law and the Economic Process'¹ and his other writings pertaining to this subject. An attempt has been made here to examine critically some of the important concepts expounded by him in the context of evolving or suggesting a methodology of social science. While doing so, as will be evident later, a number of themes, concepts and ideas from other fields have been examined to provide a better insight into the workings of scientific mind and for identifying the roots of an acceptable epistemology.

It is the contention of this paper that the concepts in question would be of great utility in social sciences whenever a serious attempt is made to discern the crucial forces in social (and hence in economic) actions and to understand the nature of interaction of such forces. It may, however, be borne in mind that Roegenian concepts cannot be accepted uncritically. Therefore in the main body of the text mention has been made of conceptual and ideological constraints of these concepts, which, act as a barrier to the smooth path to necessary conclusions that these concepts might lead to.

History and Hysteresis

Georgescu-Roegen's view on this can be summarised in the form of two simple propositions:

- (i) In the domain of social sciences, it is impossible to conceive of a process, in the broad sense of the term with a *zero level of history*, and therefore
- (ii) in social scientific investigations, for any given history H , there cannot be a H' that $H + H' = 0$.²

In other words, the idea of de-hysteresis process is inadmissible in social sciences. What is the meaning of this statement? In simple language it means that every social scientific phenomenon has to be understood along with its history for the purpose of a scientific investigation. The proper identification of social process is not possible