

BOOK REVIEW
A HISTORY OF ECONOMIC DOCTRINES
by René Gonnard

CRISTÓBAL MATARÁN

This textbook on economic thought, written by the French economist René Gonnard, was published in 1947 and translated into Spanish in 1956. Very little information about the author can be found in academic repositories, making it unlikely that any further works by him have been translated into Spanish.

As for the content, it is to be welcomed that the author does not follow the approach of most current manuals on economic thought; that is, after the customary tribute to the Physiocrats and criticism of the Mercantilists, to turn to Smith as if he were the founding father of a science *created from scratch*. Instead, Gonnard explains the development of economic thought from Ancient Greece, through the Roman Empire and the Middle Ages. The author cites medieval thinkers such as Saint Thomas Aquinas, Saint Augustine of Hippo and John Buridan, but overlooks a central point: the School of Salamanca. It was precisely in the 1930s and 1940s that the studies initiated by Grice-Hutchinson and continued by Schumpeter and Rothbard took shape with regard to the discovery of the scholastic thinkers of the Spanish Golden Age as precursors of the most diverse theories concerning money, banking, prices and entrepreneurship.

In the second section, the author turns to the dawn of economic science with mercantilism. Although calling what the mercantilists did '*science*' amounts to a leap of faith. Rather, Gonnard suggests that they made some erroneous contributions – but contributions nonetheless. Thus, Gonnard devotes a chapter to 'Iberian mercantilism'. This is explained by the union of the Spanish and Portuguese crowns that took place between 1580 and 1640 during the reigns of Philip II, Philip III and Philip IV. However, it is striking that the name of José Larraz does not appear.

In Book III, devoted to physiocracy, Gonnard begins to lay the foundations for a more scientific explanation of the economy. The question of the natural order, introduced by Turgot, begins to take shape. This section, in true French fashion, concludes with the French Revolution as the centre of the world. The agrarian question, characteristic of a pre-industrial economy, occupies the bulk of this section, although the first authors critical of the market economy are already beginning to appear.

As for the fourth section, the British Classical School dominates it overwhelmingly. This is the longest volume of the work. It is to the author's credit that he begins this section with a historical introduction to the Industrial Revolution, albeit a somewhat brief one. The usual authors (Smith, Malthus, Ricardo, Bentham and Mill, amongst others) are covered, addressing their familiar themes (value, trade, currency, etc.).

But the most interesting contribution of the entire work appears in Book IV: the author devotes an entire volume to socialist thinkers. We do not merely find the usual chapter on Marx as an appendix, or epilogue if you will, to the Classical School. In this instance, the author provides a detailed account of thinkers such as Saint-Simon, Fourier, Proudhon, Blanqui and the collectivists who followed immediately after Marx and were condemned by the mainstream of Marxism. In fact, Gonnard goes as far as the Bolsheviks of the early 20th century. A veritable display of erudition.

Finally, Book VI is entitled '*Realist Schools*'. It is here that we begin to glimpse the Marginalist Revolution carried out in unison by Jevons, Menger and Walras, although it took on quite different forms as the decades progressed. The historicists, led by Schmöller, have their own chapter, although Menger is barely given a passing mention in the discussion of methodology. However, the author does discuss Mises in greater depth, particularly in his discussion of economic calculation from the 1920s onwards.

In short, this is a textbook which, despite having become somewhat outdated in the decades since its publication, raises several interesting points, particularly regarding its treatment of socialism, towards which it takes a relatively critical stance.