

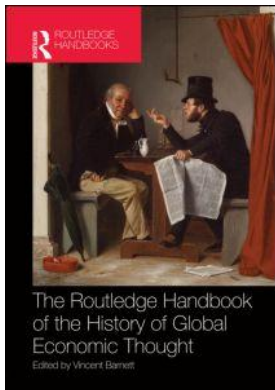
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## **Routledge Handbook of the History of Global Economic Thought**

Vincent Barnett

### **Ireland**

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## 4

## Ireland

Renee Prendergast

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In 1977, J.K. Galbraith claimed that ‘all races produced notable economists except the Irish’. Was Galbraith, with his Scottish ancestry, trying to copper fasten the claims of Adam Smith to be the true founder of political economy against the equally strong claims of the Irish-born Richard Cantillon, or did he have some inkling that the Irish relationship with political economy is disrespectful of its claims to be a universal science?

The present chapter argues that the peculiar feature of Irish involvement with political economy is that it contributed *both* to the construction of the edifice and to the undermining of its claims to universality. In order to understand how this came to be the case, we need to take account of Ireland’s relationship with England, and the implications of this for Ireland’s own development. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the English crown sought to secure its control over Ireland by embarking on a policy of land colonization by English and Scottish settlers. The last stage in this process was facilitated by a survey carried out by William Petty, who came to Ireland as the Physician in Chief to Cromwell’s armies in 1652. It was finally consolidated following the victory by William of Orange over the Stuart armies in Ireland in 1690–1. This confirmed in power a Protestant landed elite of predominantly English descent. Adherents of the Stuarts amongst the old Irish and Hiberno-Norman elites such as the Cantillons departed for France or elsewhere in Europe.

As a result of the plantation of settlers, a tenure system superficially similar to that in England was imposed on Ireland. At the top were the Anglo-Protestant landlords many of whom were absentees residing in England, the middle tier were tenant farmers: in the North-East, these were mainly Scots Presbyterians but elsewhere largely Catholic. At the bottom of the pile were the catholic cottiers and agricultural labourers. This was the group most affected by the Great Irish Famine of 1845–9, as a consequence of which their numbers were greatly reduced through death and emigration. After 1880, a series of Land Acts led to the abolition of the landlord system so that, by 1920, the majority of farmers owned the land that they worked.

Agriculture was the dominant industry in Ireland until well into the twentieth century. Given the soil and climate, its natural advantages lay in the production of pastoral rather than arable crops, and pastoral products have tended to dominate. Potatoes were originally grown as a dietary supplement, but by the early nineteenth century they had become the main food of the poor.

Although this provided a nutritious diet, the dependence on a single source of nutrition left the poor vulnerable to malnutrition and starvation when the potato crop failed.

In the late seventeenth century, there was significant growth of output and exports in the linen and woollen trades. However, the Woollen Act of 1699 ended the export of woollen goods and finer woollen production began to be subject to competition from imports. Following a period of economic crises, recovery in the second half of the eighteenth century created demand for a broad range of manufactured goods. The 1780s saw the development of a partly mechanized cotton/calico printing industry, but this succumbed to competition from the Lancashire industry in the decades following the Union with Britain in 1801.

During the remainder of the nineteenth century, most industry outside Dublin and Belfast was geared towards the domestic market. Belfast became the main location for export-oriented industry with shipbuilding, textile machinery, tobacco and rope production joining linen as important industries. These differences in industrial structure carried into the twentieth century and were an important factor in Irish partition. After independence, attempts were made to nurture domestic industry using protective tariffs. However, the restricted domestic market meant that the policy met with only limited success. Following a period of economic crisis and high levels of emigration in the 1950s, there was a re-orientation of industrial policy towards attracting international investment. Partly because of the opportunities Ireland could provide through access to the single European market, this policy met with considerable success and contributed to the Celtic Tiger phenomenon of the 1990s. Meanwhile, in Northern Ireland, the 'troubles' and the inability to pursue independent industrial policy meant that there was insufficient new industry to compensate for the decay of traditional activities.

### The development of economic ideas over the long term

With the exception of Petty (English) and Cantillon (Hiberno-Norman), most of the important contributors to economic thought in Ireland in the seventeenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries came from members of Protestant elite. They were mainly educated at Trinity College, Dublin from which both Irish Catholics and dissenters – Ulster Scots Presbyterians – were debarred. Many achieved fame in other fields: Jonathan Swift in literature; George Berkeley and Francis Hutcheson in philosophy; Edmund Burke in politics. Some held high office in the established church, while others including Longfield, I. Butt, Hearn, J.E. Cairnes, T.E. Cliffe Leslie and C.F. Bastable had a background in law.

Prior to independence, Irish writers on political economy often resided and worked in England during part or all of their careers and could be regarded as forming part of a wider British economics community. Lurking in the background, however, were challenges to the official view and cautions that general maxims might not be applicable in the specific circumstances of Ireland. For some this pointed to the need for reforms that would make Irish institutions conform more closely to the English model. For others it pointed to the need for a different form of analysis and for institutions more in keeping with the culture of the people.

William Petty (1623–87) was the most important political economist of the seventeenth century, in Ireland or anywhere else. His contribution is foundational for a number of reasons. First, he sought to place political economy on a sound empirical footing by expressing himself 'in terms of *number weight* or *measure*' by using only 'arguments of sense', and by considering 'only such causes as have visible foundations in nature' (Petty, 1899: 244). Second, he conceived of the economy as an interrelated whole and, when he considered specific aspects such as foreign trade or monetary policy, he did so in the context of the wider system. Petty should

also be credited for the first attempts to calculate national income and with initiating modern discussions of the division of labour including its dependence on the extent of the market.

It is commonplace nowadays to point out that, for all its appearance of objectivity, Petty's use of political arithmetic was a creative enterprise designed to sell ambitious economic, social and political projects whose objective in the Irish case was to secure British rule, and with it the security of Petty's own possessions (McCormick, 2009). In Petty's defence, it should be noted that there was little or no reliable data available at the time and if his estimates were sometimes rough and ready, they often provided a good starting point for analysis. *The Political Anatomy of Ireland* written in 1671–2 is a good example of the approach.

It starts by accounting for the lands of Ireland measured in Irish acres and classified according to quality and ownership. Petty then estimated the number of people classified by religion, national origin and occupation. This, in turn, allowed him to identify the extent of under- and unproductive employment which he regarded as a measure of development potential because, once employed productively, these 'spare hands' could add to local or universal (tradeable) wealth. Petty denied that Irish underdevelopment was due to disposition of the people and identified its main causes as constraints on Ireland's trade, an insufficiency of coin to drive the nation's trade, underdeveloped consumption patterns amongst the poor, perceived illegitimacy of rulers, rent-seeking and low population density (Petty, 1899).

The remedies proposed included restoration of trade with the plantations and England, regularisation of money, a bank based on landed property as security in order to reduce interest rates, reformation of the housing of the poor, application of some of the spare hands to the building of roads, bridges and harbours, union with England and later the transportation of large numbers from Ireland to England. Despite a suggestion that the nobility and wealthy citizens should by example discountenance the use of certain foreign commodities, Petty did not favour protection, arguing in *Political Anatomy* that the proceeds of exports would be more than sufficient to pay for imported products.

Petty's *Political Anatomy* was published posthumously in 1690 at a time of moderate prosperity which continued into the early decades of the eighteenth century. However, a quarter century punctuated by severe crisis and famine began around 1720. Initially the crisis was precipitated by the South Sea Bubble in England but it was exacerbated by problems of currency misalignment, the protection of the English market and poor weather conditions (Kelly, 1991). This evoked a response in the form of a steady stream of pamphlets from Molesworth, Prior, Browne, Hutcheson, Swift, Madden and Berkeley.

In many cases, the problems identified (lack of investment, trade restrictions, currency misalignment and lack of coin) and the remedies proposed did not differ substantially from Petty's. However, whereas Petty focused on problems associated with contested property rights in land, the later authors saw short leases as the main problem because tenants would not invest if they knew that rent would be raised in proportion to the improvements that they had made. Moreover, while Petty complained that Ireland being 'thinly peopled' was an impediment to its development, by the 1720s, unemployment and poverty had emerged as major problems, causing Jonathan Swift (1667–1745) to argue that (Petty's) maxim 'that people are the riches of a nation' did not apply in Ireland (Swift, 1925: 70).

Faced with the constraints placed by the British parliament on Irish trade, some, including Swift and George Berkeley (1685–1753), advocated the substitution of domestic products for imports as a means of developing domestic industry. Others, including Arthur Dobbs (1689–1765), who became governor of North Carolina in 1733, and John Browne, made the case that Britain's own interest would be best served by the promotion rather than restriction of Irish trade. Of the authors who urged the cultivation of domestic demand, Swift focused on

the need to re-orientate the consumption patterns of the rich and to stem the leakage of demand due to absentee landlords. While Berkeley also saw potential in changing the consumption patterns of the rich even by way of a sumptuary law he, like Petty, emphasized the need to expand the wants of the poorer classes in order to create demand and to make them industrious.

During the early part of his career, spent in England, Swift showed himself to be more alive than most to the implications of the financial revolution for the transfer of political power from the landed gentry to the finance capitalists. In Ireland, he continued in this view and opposed the setting up of a National Bank (Swift, 1925: 27–30). By contrast, Berkeley saw the potential of the new financial instruments, arguing in his *Querist* that real wealth consisted in the plenty of the necessaries and comforts of life and the power to command the industry of others while money was simply a ticket or a counter for conveying or recording such power. As such, paper money and bank deposits were perfectly adequate and had some advantages over coin. This was a radical position at the time. Before Berkeley, John Law had argued for a purely fiduciary monetary system but with Law discredited following the collapse of the Mississippi Scheme, Berkeley's position was a minority one and was to remain so for three hundred years (Murphy, 2000).

One of those who made a fortune from Law's scheme was Richard Cantillon (1680?–1734), who became part of the Irish diaspora in Europe in the early eighteenth century. Alongside his great fortune, he acquired many enemies and was murdered in 1734. His *Essay on the Nature of Trade in General* was first published in 1755, but it had circulated in manuscript form and was extensively plagiarized both in England and in France. The first edition (issued in French but bearing a London imprint) is a great rarity of economics literature.

In his analysis, Cantillon completed the process, begun by Petty, of looking at the economy as an interconnected system. Starting with a hypothetical self-sufficient estate managed so as to best satisfy the owner's preferences, Cantillon showed that, rather than manage the estate himself, the owner could rent it to farmers and buy what he wanted from them. The farmers would have an incentive to work harder, and the operation of the price mechanism would force them to adjust their outputs in accordance with the desires of the landowner. Having explained the operation of the price mechanism using the concepts of intrinsic value and market price, Cantillon examined the flows of money between the different sectors and classes in Part II of the *Essay*.

He also provided a nuanced exposition of the quantity theory of money in which the impact of increased money supply on prices depends on the source of the increase, and of the price-specie flow mechanism which emphasized the long lags involved and the potential for policy intervention. The final part of the *Essay* extends the discussion of foreign exchange and considers issues relating to the role of paper money and the management of national debt. Cantillon's *Essay* does not appear to have been known in Ireland but was influential elsewhere. Quesnay's *Tableau Economique* builds on part II of the *Essay*. Cantillon may also have influenced Smith's theory of the market allocation of resources, though Smith unlike Cantillon has no role for the entrepreneur in the allocation process (Murphy, 2009: 81).

The last quarter of the eighteenth century saw the Irish Parliament secure a measure of legislative independence which enabled limited protection of the Irish market, although proposals for freer trade with Britain continued to be opposed by British manufacturing interests. However, by the union with Britain in 1801 there was a change in outlook as technical progress made English manufacturers confident of their commercial strength. Subsequently, British economists commented routinely on Irish affairs.

Despite some differences of emphasis, there was agreement amongst the likes of Ricardo, Malthus, Torrens and Trower that Irish agriculture was grossly inefficient and that improvements to agriculture would require the destruction of small tenancies. A system of agriculture more

like the English one would produce the necessary food and raw materials more efficiently and release labour for employment in manufacturing. The problem was how to get from the existing situation to the new one. While some argued that Irish labourers needed to develop a taste for luxuries in order to create demand for local industry and increase their willingness to work, others warned that increases in consumption were more likely to be met by English imports. Yet others were concerned that the sequencing of development required the removal of labour from agriculture ahead of the provision of new sources of employment in manufactures and commerce.

This pointed to the need for a coherent set of measures such as poor relief, organized emigration or some measure of industrial protection. There was also some recognition that the problem arose at the level of institutions. Ricardo, somewhat optimistically, argued that if property was secure and contracts were reliably fulfilled, capital would flow into Ireland resulting in adoption of the most economical processes and abundant demand for labour. Nicholls, however, seems to have had a better appreciation of the self-reinforcing nature of the various problems: ‘Want of capital produces want of employment – want of employment, turbulence and misery, – turbulence and misery, insecurity – insecurity prevents the introduction and accumulation of capital, and so on’ (Black, 1960). Senior was even more categorical, identifying the insecurity of person and property arising from the detestation of Ireland’s existing institutions by the mass of the people as the evil that creates or perpetuates all her other calamities. This Senior put down to ignorance – the lack of moral and intellectual education.

The provision of moral and intellectual education in the form of political economy was a mission of Senior’s friend and former tutor Richard Whately (1787–1863), who following his appointment as Archbishop of Dublin in 1831 established the first Irish chair of political economy at Trinity College Dublin. More ambitiously, he sought to diffuse knowledge of political economy at every level of society and had a vehicle for doing so through his role as a commissioner for the national school system. Whately’s *Easy Lessons on Money Matters* – a successful publication in its own right – was incorporated into the lesson books provided by the commissioners as a basis for the school curriculum and, reached a broad audience in Ireland and elsewhere (Boylan and Foley, 1992). Whately’s approach was all about exchange. While labour could function as a measure of value, it was not its source. To be valuable goods had to be exchangeable, desired and scarce. Whereas in Ricardo’s view, the interests of different classes could be opposed to one another, Whately’s presumed a natural harmony of interests. Providence had so arranged things that, in an advanced state of society, self-interested and indeed selfish behaviour conduced to public prosperity.

Mountifort Longfield (1802–84), the first incumbent of the Whately chair, is recognised as having developed a proto-marginalist theory of value and distribution in opposition to the Ricardian view. The full extent of his anti-Ricardianism is subject to dispute, as is the extent to which his demand theory can be regarded as a forerunner of marginal utility theory. There is, however, agreement that Longfield developed a supply and demand theory of price, a marginal productivity theory of profit and a productivity theory of wages (Prendergast, 2010). Longfield viewed his analysis as showing that it was impossible to regulate wages by means of combinations or legislation, and that the only means by which the condition of the labourer could be improved was through an increase in productivity.

Although Longfield can be regarded as a harmony theorist who defended the status quo, he was one of the few economists to analyse the impact of absenteeism, and showed that it was prejudicial to the welfare of the community by worsening Irish terms of trade. Longfield also made important contributions in the currency controversies of the mid-nineteenth century and

to the field of international trade (Black, 1971). Longfield's work on value and distribution was taken forward by his successors in the Whately chair – Isaac Butt (1813–79), James Anthony Lawson and William Neilson Hancock. However, their contributions were not influential as they were largely ignored by the leading economists of the day.

Afterwards, the intervention of the Great Irish Famine meant that later occupants of the Whately chair such as John Elliott Cairnes (1823–75) had very different pre-occupations. Cairnes' best known contributions are his book *The Slave Power* and his theory of non-competing groups. He was also a critic of *laissez-faire*, arguing that it amounted to an assumption that human interests were naturally harmonious – an assumption which neglected the reality of different class and interests. Cairnes' critique of *laissez-faire* had its origins in his consideration of the political economy of Irish land. According to Cairnes, the economic basis of property was the right of the producer to the fruits of his labour, while the basis for rent was that it consisted of excess returns over and above what was required to replace used capital and to provide normal profits. Cairnes argued that if the rights of the landlord were pushed beyond a certain point, they would come into conflict with the rights of the producer, which were actually more fundamental. In England and Scotland, it could be assumed that the competition between agriculture and other modes of investing capital was sufficient to ensure that actual rents did not exceed economic rents but this was not the case in most countries. Consequently, other means had to be found for ensuring the fairness of rents. Cairnes' conclusions can be summed as defending the right of the landlord to a 'fair rent' but imposing on the state the duty of determining what this 'fair rent' should be (Cairnes, 1873).

Arguments for reform of the land tenure system, for longer leases and for tenants' right to compensation for improvements had been put forward in the nineteenth century by Arthur O'Connor, William Conner, Thomas Davis and Gavan Duffy. However, it was only in the aftermath of the Great Famine that these proposals began to be treated seriously by economists of the stature of J.S. Mill and Cairnes. Their acceptance that it might be necessary for the state to intervene in the contracts between landlords and their tenants was a significant departure in itself but also had wider implications in that it undermined the notion that political economy was a body of immutable truths and therefore paved the way for the development of historical economics.

T.E. Cliffe Leslie (1826–82) of Queen's College, Belfast, who resided mainly in London and John Kells Ingram (1823–1907) of Trinity College, Dublin are widely regarded as leading members of what is often referred to as the English Historical School. Leslie carried out interdisciplinary investigations into military systems and land tenure in Europe, including Ireland. Having attended some lectures by Henry Maine on historical jurisprudence, he sought to apply the approach within political economy arguing that 'political economy is not a body of natural laws . . . but an assemblage of speculations and doctrines which are the result of a particular history' (Leslie, 1888). Leslie also emphasized that political economy should be inductive rather than deductive. Deductive theories imposed an artificial homogeneity and took no account of the fact that the movement of the economic world was from simplicity to complexity and from the known to the unknown.

Ingram's book, *A History of Political Economy* was a wide ranging relativist account of the history of the subject in Europe and America. He cited Maine, Spencer and the German Historical School in support of his view that only the historical approach would yield an adequate understanding of phenomena. Like Leslie, he was critical of the abstract, deductive approach but, as a disciple of Comte, he placed particular emphasis on the fact that the economy is imbedded in the wider social system so that a proper study of economic phenomena has to engage with

this broader context. Ingram's book was translated into several European languages as well as Japanese. It was also influential in the United States where Ingram was made an honorary member of the American Economic Association in 1891.

## Modern economics

Two important Irish-born economists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were Charles Bastable (1855–1945) and Francis Ysidoro Edgeworth (1845–1926), both educated in Trinity College, Dublin. Like his predecessor in the Whately chair, Bastable was an adherent of the classical approach to political economy and was also influenced by the historical approach of his compatriots Leslie and Ingram. His main contributions were in the fields of public finance and international trade, where he devised a stringent test of the conditions in which the infant industry argument applied (Boylan and Maloney, 2011).

Edgeworth's entire career was spent in London and Oxford. He became the first editor of the *Economic Journal* and made several foundational contributions to modern economics. Edgeworth is best known to students of economics as the originator of the Edgeworth box, which is commonly used in the explanation of general equilibrium theory. While Edgeworth identified the conditions in which a general equilibrium could exist, his own main interest was in the indeterminateness of contracts and not their perfect determination (Baccini, 2011). In addition to contract theory, Edgeworth also made contributions to international trade, monopoly pricing and to mathematical economics generally.

Berkeley had advocated import substitution as the only realistic option available in the absence of free trade. In the mid-nineteenth century, Butt (1846) showed that the protection of domestic industry would raise overall welfare in the conditions of widespread unemployment prevalent in Ireland. With the movement towards Irish independence in the early twentieth century, Arthur Griffith drew on Friedrich List to propose a programme of economic development based on protection of domestic producers until they were strong enough to meet international competition.

Bastable had earlier argued that such a strategy could be justified only where the discounted value of future cost savings exceeded the excess costs incurred during the period of protection. Others pointed to the small size of the market, the dangers of retaliation and the impact in terms of rising costs for exporting industries such as agriculture. Nonetheless, the advent of the Great Depression and a change of government in the 1930s saw the adoption of protectionist policies which were further intensified during World War Two. These remained in place until the late 1950s when a more outward looking industrial strategy was heralded by the publication of the *Economic Development* (Whitaker Report) (Boylan and Prendergast, 2008).

When Ireland achieved independence in 1922, its cadre of professional economists was small. The Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland (SSISI) (founded 1847) and its journal provided the main discussion forum for academic economists and government officials. Issues debated usually reflected the public interests of the time as perceived by the intellectual elite. They included agricultural efficiency, population, emigration, and the relevance of Keynesianism in the Irish context and the role of government in the economy. There were also major debates on industrial strategy in the 1950s and again in the 1980s.

Although George Duncan and T.J. Kiernan produced early estimates of Irish National Income, expertise in quantitative analysis was limited and influential economists such as George O'Brien adopted a largely literary approach. The Economic Research Institute (ERI) (later Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI)) was set up in 1960 funded by a grant from the Ford



Foundation to rectify this deficiency. Its first director Roy Geary used his international contacts to recruit suitably trained staff and initiate a programme of training for young researchers. Although best known as a statistician, Geary himself had made important contributions to economics particularly the field of National Income Accounting. His innovations include the Stone-Geary utility function, the 'Geary' method of accounting for the trading gains or losses from changes in the terms of trade in estimating real income and the 'Geary-Khamis' method of computing purchasing power parities for conversion of national currency-denominated economic aggregates into a common, comparable currency unit (Spencer, 2011).

The present generation of Irish economists are more numerous and better trained than their predecessors in the early years of the twentieth century. Many are the products of graduate schools in the United States and in Britain. However, much of their research output relates to Irish problems and is published in Irish journals. Since the 1970s issues relating to Ireland's relationship with the European Community – the Common Agricultural Policy, the Single European Market, Regional Policy, the ERM, the Euro and more recently debt and stabilization – have been important topics for research. Work in the field of health economics has also become increasingly prevalent. A relatively small number of Irish economists have international reputations in their specialties: John Spencer, Queen's Belfast, for applied general equilibrium analysis; Peter Neary, University College Dublin, for his work on Dutch Disease; Kevin O'Rourke for his work on globalization and Philip Lane for his estimates of countries' foreign assets and liabilities.

As in earlier centuries, some of the most important work by Irish-born economists continues to be carried out in the United States and in Britain. Terence Gorman (1923–2003), who was educated at Trinity but spent his entire career at English universities, sought to develop tools to facilitate an understanding of the links between individuals' preferences and market behaviour. To this end, he carried out foundational work on the aggregation of preferences. He also explored the issue of separability in individual decision making, that is, the conditions under optimization problems can be broken into stages (Honohan and Neary, 2011). John Sutton, London School of Economics, has made important contributions on market structure. Canice Prendergast, University of Chicago, is a leading authority on incentives while Brian Arthur, Stanford and Santa Fe, has pioneered the new field of complexity.

## International influences

In their introduction to *A History of Irish Economic Thought*, Boylan *et al.* (2011) indicated that while the questions that preoccupied political economists in Ireland were often the product of the particular conjuncture, there was no distinctly national Irish tradition of political economy. From Petty, Cantillon, Berkeley and Hutcheson through to Edgeworth and Gorman, writers from Ireland contributed significantly to the wider edifice of political economy. That said, the view that the maxims of political economy did not apply universally was a theme which was articulated not just by the post-famine historical economists but also by Jonathan Swift, who declared his contempt for those who proceed on general maxims, and by Edmund Burke, who warned that those who reason on abstract principles will be liable to the greatest errors imaginable (Prendergast, 2000).

As indicated above, Cairnes, Leslie and Ingram were particularly influenced by Maine or the German Historical School. Their recognition that the economy was imbedded in a wider legal and institutional framework which could not be ignored was influential in Britain and also in the United States where it was welcomed by the nascent Institutional school. R.D.C. Black

in particular has noted the importance of the mid-nineteenth century debate on Irish land tenure, and the recognition of its non-contractual features, as modifying prevailing attitudes to markets and the role of government.

Irish ideas also travelled abroad as a result of emigration. Most emigration was economically motivated but for others it was motivated by political disagreement or the need to escape imprisonment. Thus, Mathew Carey (1760–1839), who had been active in the volunteer movement in Dublin at a time when the Irish parliament was taking steps to protect domestic industry, emigrated to America, where in his *Essays on Political Economy*, he was one of the first to articulate arguments in support of Hamilton's protectionist policy. Charles Gavan Duffy (1816–1903), editor of *The Nation* who had agitated for tenants' rights emigrated to Australia, eventually becoming Premier of the State of Victoria. William Hearn (1826–88), formerly Professor of Greek at Queen's College, Galway, also emigrated to Victoria where he became professor at Melbourne and authored *Plutology Or the Theory of the Efforts to Satisfy Human Wants*, in which he articulated a demand-oriented theory of value. Like Duffy, Hearn was a free-trader, but whereas Duffy advocated government intervention, Hearn was a strong believer in the efficacy of market forces (Moore, 2011).

## Conclusion

While therefore, there can be no doubt about the major contribution of theorists such as Cantillon, Cairnes, Edgeworth, Geary, Gorman and Arthur to the development of the subject as a whole, and to this extent there was nothing specifically Irish about their contribution, it can also be argued that they did have one major characteristic in common. This is that their models and theories were never ends in themselves, but designed to facilitate an understanding of the real economy. In this, their Irish background, in an economy very different from that of England but also one which was in a very special relationship to it, made them particularly aware of both specific institutional features, and the dangers of general maxims.

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