

Comments on Giacomo Borbone's Book *The Relevance of Models. Idealization and Concretization in Leszek Nowak*

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Abstract: Chapter II of Borbone's book addresses Nowak's innovative views and reconstruction of the methods used in Marx's economic works, namely, Marx's delineation of the law of value, as well as Marx's explanation based on this law as performed by the method of gradual concretization. In Chapter III, Borbone provides a comparison of Nowak's approach to scientific laws and scientific explanation with that of Hempel. From that comparison Nowak's approach comes out as superior to that of Hempel due to the former's ability to reconstruct laws containing equations, the possibility to address the issue of the explanation of a scientific law from other scientific laws, as well as a more fine-grained view on the very nature scientific explanation.

Keywords: Explanation of scientific laws; Hempel; idealization; law of value; Leszek Nowak; Marx.

For me the most interesting parts of Borbone's book were Chapter II: "Science and Marxian Method" (Borbone 2021, 46-86) and Chapter III:

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“Leszek Nowak and the Idealizational Conception of Science” (Borbone 2021, 287-165). Chapter II addresses Nowak’s views on methods used by Marx in his “mature” economic works. Borbone shows Nowak’s innovative reconstruction of Marx’s delineation of the law of value, as well as Marx’s explanation based on this law as performed by the method of gradual concretization. In Chapter III, Borbone presents in detail Nowak’s idealizational conception of science. For me as most important appears here Borbone’s comparison of Nowak’s approach to scientific laws and scientific explanation with that of Hempel. From that comparison Nowak’s approach comes out as superior to that Hempel in at least the following four issues. First, Nowak — contrary to Hempel — choses a richer model language that, in turn, enables to deal with equations stated in the context of scientific laws. Second, in this context Nowak can provide a richer—compared to Hempel—typology of conditions that are relevant for scientific explanation. Here I mean Nowak’s introduction of the concept of secondary (modification) conditions that, contrary to the so-called “initial/boundary” conditions, are stated in the structure of scientific laws. Third, based on that concept of condition, Nowak—again contrary to Hempel—is able to reconstruct the explanation of scientific laws based on other (idealized) scientific laws by the method termed by Nowak as “explanation by gradual concretization.” Fourth, and finally, Nowak provides—compared to Hempel—a more fine-grained view of scientific explanation. For Hempel explanation involves two steps: subsumption of the explanandum-event to be explained under the respective explanans-laws and (deductive or inductive) inference of the explanandum-event. In Nowak’s approach explanation involved not two, but three steps: subsumption, concretization of the idealized law to the modification conditions of the explanandum-event or explanandum-law, and only then inference of these explananda. In sum, I view Borbone’s book as a successful and valuable analysis and reconstruction of the works of Leszek as one of the most important representative of the Poznań School of Methodology.

References

- Borbone, Giacomo. 2021. *The Relevance of Models. Idealization and Concretization in Leszek Nowak*. München: Grin Verlag.