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One Movement, Two Registers: Scholarship, Advocacy, and their Division of Labor in the Pluralism-in-Economics Movement

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One Movement, Two Registers: Scholarship, Advocacy, and their Division of Labor in the Pluralism-in-Economics Movement

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1. Introduction

What do the “TINT Center for Philosophy of Science” – a “Centre of Excellenc” of the Academy of Finland – and the organizers of activist workshops offering speaker trainings for politically engaged academics have in common? They are both part of what is commonly referred to as the *pluralism-in-economics (PiE) movement*. Rather than being a (not very good) joke, this illustrates an important feature of the PiE movement: its enormous internal diversity. On one side of its spectrum, it comprises academic debates covering fields as diverse as economics proper, the philosophy of science, the sociology of science, and science and technology studies. The topics range from conceptual ones – such as “What is pluralism?” – via applied ones – such as “Which mechanisms drive the degree of plurality in economics?” – to empirical ones – such as “What is the current state of plurality in economics?”. They also cover applied work, which studies certain phenomena from an explicitly pluralist viewpoint (e.g., the *Keynes-meets-Schumpeter* models of Dosi et al. (2010), bridging post-Keynesian and evolutionary economics to understand growth, business cycles and inequality), and while such work was traditionally conducted by heterodox economists, there are more and more critiques of the status quo of economics coming directly from within the current mainstream echoing – consciously or unconsciously – classical pluralist arguments (e.g., Heckman and Moktan 2020; Akerlof 2020; Deaton 2024).

On the other side of the PiE movement stand activists and organizations, rallying for greater plurality in economics, such as the German *Network for Pluralism in Economics*, the British *Rethinking Economics*, the *ISIPE*, and many others. These actors operate not (only) in the academic sphere, but in the wider societal and political arena: they have published open

letters, opinion pieces in newspapers and blogs, organize discussion panels, or offer the above-mentioned speaker trainings.

Of course, these two groups do not constitute a binary separation of the movement. Rather, they span a continuum with many actors, such as the *Institute for New Economics Thinking*, being placed in between.¹ Moreover, it would be wrong to think of them as separate groups, made up by different individuals. Rather, it is more useful to think about them through the lens of different *registers*²: the same person can operate in different registers at different times, and the different registers are closely interdependent. In fact, this also applies very directly to myself as the author of this essay: I started as a student, founding a local university group rallying for more pluralism in economics teaching. Now, as the holder of a professorship for pluralist economics – a position that exists only because of political struggles by other members of the PiE movement, inside and outside academia – much of my work is academic, and I give my best to be transparent about when I act as an activist, and when as a scholar. This trajectory illustrates not only the interdependence of two central registers, an advocacy and a scholarly one. But it also suggests also, as I will argue, a workable division of labor between them — one in which advocacy and scholarship are mutually indispensable precisely because they are kept distinct. That claim is the constructive core of this chapter, and I return to it in the conclusion.

The fact that these two registers co-exist is not surprising, given that economics is a socially and politically relevant and influential science. Neither is it specific to the case of the PiE movement. It is also not a problem for the PiE movement per se, as the two registers can be mutually reinforcing. It does, however, come with specific challenges that warrant attention. The present essay is about two closely related ones.

The first is a challenge of *structural entanglement*: an unavoidable interweaving of epistemological and normative arguments that arises from a structural feature shared by all movements that span scholarly and public registers. It does not depend on individuals, and it is not blameworthy in itself. It arises whenever the same actors operate in both registers, when the subject matter itself fuses fact and value, and when audiences cannot reliably read which register is operative. Its source is symmetric in the sense that neither register systematically exploits the other; its practical manifestation is the unreflexive mixing of registers. As I will argue below, this challenge is best addressed by transparency and register-awareness, not by the elimination of political motivation or the denial of tensions.

¹ The same actors might also change their position over time; in Germany, for instance, the Network for Pluralism in Economics started as a more activist movement, became more focused on scholarly work after 2015, and turned more activist again in recent years.

² *Register* here denotes a mode of communication defined by its characteristic norms of justification, legitimacy criteria, and audience expectations, rather than primarily around linguistic form. See Section 2.2 for more details. For the more technical notion of register as situation-linked ways of using language, see e.g., Biber and Conrad (2009).

The second is a challenge of *epistemic capture*: a more specific and directional pattern in which actors within the PiE movement deploy the authority of the scholarly register to confer scientific legitimacy on conclusions whose warrant is substantially normative — presenting political arguments as scientific ones. Unlike the first challenge, this pattern is asymmetric in its direction: it runs from advocacy to scholarship, recruiting scholarly authority for work it has not epistemically warranted. Its most explicit philosophical articulation is the *Rortyan collapse* — the denial that the scholarly register has any special epistemic norms distinguishing it from political advocacy. This chapter argues that the collapse is both philosophically indefensible and strategically self-undermining.

The argument is not an attack on political commitment in scholarship, or the fact that scholars are also politically active. The argument is narrower and, I hope, more useful: just because the idea of a completely value-free and objective science is a chimera, this does not mean that there is no viable distinction between political and scientific arguments, between fact and values, between science and activism. Calls to collapse the two registers are, therefore, misplaced, and philosophically more defensible alternatives are available.

To develop this argument, the essay proceeds as follows: First, Section 2 defines key concepts, elaborates the two-register structure, and substantiates the challenge of *structural entanglement*. Then Section 3 examines the fact-value distinction and its stakes: why both the hermetic separation of facts and values *and* their complete collapse are untenable, and what a defensible middle position looks like. After discussing some empirical examples in evidence, Section 5 develops a constructive proposal: register transparency, the Veblen/Myrdal norm in practice, and a division of labour between actors in the scholarly and advocacy registers. Finally, Section 6 concludes and outlines avenues for future work.

2. Many Pluralisms, Two Registers, One Structural Challenge

2.1 Key concepts

A small number of analytical distinctions will be helpful to structure the upcoming discussion. Following Mäki (1997), a first important step is to separate *plurality* from *pluralism*. Plurality is a descriptive category: it refers to the multitude of a given type of item. What that item is must always be specified — there can be a larger or smaller plurality of theoretical frameworks in economics, of modeling approaches, of scholarly identities, and so on. Lari and Mäki (2024) further distinguish between the *degree* of plurality and the *degree* of diversity among these items, where diversity captures the variety or dissimilarity between them rather than their sheer number. A discipline might exhibit a large plurality of models while those models remain closely similar in structure; conversely, a small number of genuinely distinct approaches may represent greater diversity than a large number of superficially different ones.

Pluralism, by contrast, is a normative concept: it denotes a principled stance in favour of a certain degree of plurality of some type of item. As a normative concept, pluralism always requires a reference to values, and these values can come from different dimensions. Epistemological values provide one such basis: greater plurality may be argued for on the grounds that it improves the discipline's capacity to generate knowledge about a complex object of inquiry. Ontological values provide another: if economic reality is itself structured in ways that no single theoretical framework can exhaust, plurality follows from the nature of the object rather than merely from the limitations of current knowledge. Political values provide a third basis: greater plurality may be advocated because the current composition of the discipline inadequately serves broader social, democratic, or ecological ends. This chapter focuses on the tension between epistemological and political justifications — not because ontological (or other) arguments are unimportant, but because the epistemological/political tension is where the structural challenge discussed below arises from most clearly (see Gräbner and Strunk 2020 for a more extensive discussion of the other dimensions). Moreover, the distinction between epistemological and political justifications for pluralism is not merely taxonomic, but it tracks a difference in the kind of warrant being claimed – i.e. what type of justification the speaker involves as the reason for their assertion – which is the basis for the register distinction developed in the next section.

2.2 Two registers

A register denotes a mode of communication defined by its characteristic norms of justification, legitimacy criteria, and audience expectations (for an original, sociolinguistic introduction see, e.g., Biber and Conrad 2009). In the following, I distinguish two key registers in which actors of the PiE movement operate, and argue that the criterion to distinguish them is the kind of warrant actually claimed within the respective register.

The primary legitimacy of the *scholarly* register is epistemic: arguments made within this register must meet scientific standards of evidence and argument, and are regularly judged as to how they advance the knowledge created by the research community under consideration. What distinguishes a peer-reviewed article from a policy brief is not just format but the type of warrant being claimed – a point already implicit in Weber (1919)'s argument for methodological discipline and the bracketing of value judgements within scholarly work. Operationally, this commits scholars in this register to fallibilism: their findings must remain in principle revisable by evidence and argument, even where revision would be unwelcome on normative grounds. Correspondingly, for a justification of more plurality to be convincing within this register, epistemological arguments are key. Note that this does not require that scholarly work be value-free (which it isn't, see, e.g., Putnam 2002; Reiss 2017) — it requires only that, within this register, epistemic challenges are treated as decisive: a claim that fails evidential or inferential scrutiny cannot be rescued by its political utility.

The *advocacy* register operates by a different and equally coherent logic. Here, political arguments — such as the desire for equality, societal welfare, or the transformation toward an ecologically sustainable economy — are accepted on at least equal footing with

epistemological ones. Persuasion, coalition-building, and normative commitment are not merely tolerated but legitimate and expected. Calls for greater plurality justified by political arguments — such as gender equality for its own sake, or the imperative to address the problems that matter most to those whose interests are inadequately served — are perfectly acceptable within this register. Operationally, this means that commitment, rather than fallibilism, is the appropriate stance: positions are held because their underlying values are endorsed, and they are not automatically defeasible by empirical inconvenience.

In this context, a few clarifications are in order. First, neither of the two registers is *a priori* superior — both are perfectly legitimate modes of inquiry and intervention, and the argument of this chapter does not privilege one over the other. Nor does the register distinction imply a division of personnel: the same individual can operate in both registers at different times. More importantly, the distinction between registers should not be confused with the distinction between descriptive and prescriptive statements: one can make descriptive claims in the advocacy register and prescriptive claims in the scholarly register. A scholarly article may well argue that economics ought to be reformed; what makes it scholarly is not the absence of normative conclusions but the epistemic discipline with which they are reached and the fallibilist commitment that governs the argument. What matters is not the content type but the operative warrant.

Finally, the two registers do not form a simple binary but span a continuous spectrum, and both are characterised by high levels of internal variation. Within the scholarly register, *genres* typical of academic work — peer-reviewed articles, research monographs, working papers — carry epistemic warrant by convention, which is part of what makes them straightforwardly citable and assessable. But the degree to which individual works remain within the scholarly register varies considerably. Dobusch and Kapeller (2012) focus rather exclusively on epistemological arguments and barely enter political debates; Hodgson et al. (1992) similarly addressed the scientific community on epistemological grounds. Fischer et al. (2017) occupies an intermediate zone: strong focus on epistemological defences of plurality, but occasionally shading toward the advocacy register in the justification of their demand for institutional change. The advocacy register is equally varied, ranging from more political arguments — such as the *Exploring Economics* Mission Statement — to more mixed justifications, such as the open letter of ISIPE (2014), which combines epistemological and political arguments. The genres typical of this register — open letters, manifestos, opinion pieces, public talks — are harder to pin down precisely because they circulate outside the citable formats that anchor the scholarly register, though they are no less consequential for that.

2.3 The structural relationship and the challenge of structural entanglement

The co-existence of two registers in a politically relevant discipline such as economics generates an unavoidable entanglement of epistemological and normative arguments that no amount of individual discipline can fully eliminate. This entanglement — which this chapter calls *structural entanglement* — is structural in the sense that it arises from features

of the discipline and the movement that cannot be removed, and it is non-culpable in the sense that it does not depend on the carelessness or bad faith of individual actors. It has three distinct but interconnected layers.

The first concerns a policy-relevant science such as economics, where facts and values are entangled at the level of the object itself (e.g., Reiss 2017). Welfare metrics, distributional weights, and development criteria all embed normative choices that cannot be cleanly excised without changing what is being studied, especially in fields such as welfare economics, inequality research, or development economics. This is not due to the carelessness of researchers or the pitfalls of their methodology. Rather, it reflects the nature of the discipline's subject matter.

The second layer concerns the individuals involved: as indicated above, the same actor may traverse both registers. When the same person writes a peer-reviewed article on determinants of pro-poor policies on Monday and signs a public letter on a poverty reduction program on Thursday, the norms governing each activity may bleed into the other without deliberate choice. The genre conventions discussed in the previous section provide some protection against this — a signatory to an open letter is already flagged as operating in the advocacy register — but many texts produced by the PiE movement do not carry their register by convention and offer no reliable signal to readers about what warrant is being claimed.

The third layer concerns reception and the way audiences assign epistemic authority. The confusion here lies primarily not with the actors producing arguments but with those receiving them. In the absence of reliable genre conventions for signalling which kind of warrant is operative, audiences tend to classify arguments by the perceived register of their source rather than by the warrant actually claimed: an epistemologically grounded argument may be dismissed as mere advocacy because its author is associated with the advocacy register by her audience, while an argument with a substantially political warrant may be granted scientific authority because its author is not. Neither of these reception failures is the fault of the actor producing the argument. This reception asymmetry is compounded by a structural feature of public discourse: in many public debates, conclusions presented as scientific are treated as carrying greater authority than those presented as value-based — regardless of whether that hierarchy is epistemically warranted (on the fact-laden character of normative claims and the value-laden character of empirical ones, see Section 3). This is not a pattern that individual actors produce or control; it is a property of the communicative-institutional environment within which both registers operate.

Together, the three layers constitute structural entanglement: an unavoidable entanglement of epistemological and normative arguments that arises when a policy-relevant science operates simultaneously in scholarly and advocacy registers. This problem is symmetric in its source: neither register systematically exploits the other. The blurring runs in both directions, and its source is structural rather than behavioural. This is not a defect of particular actors but a predictable consequence of the three structural layers. It

follows that the appropriate response is not to demand that actors choose between registers or abandon political commitments, but to cultivate the register-awareness and transparency that reduce unreflective mixing — a point developed in Section 5.

3. The Fact-Value Distinction and Its Stakes

3.1 Three positions on the fact-value distinction

The three layers of structural entanglement identified in the previous section share a common presupposition: that there is a meaningful distinction between epistemological and normative warrant. Whether that presupposition can be sustained — and on what grounds — is related to the question of the *fact-value distinction*. The distinction has a long history in both philosophy of science and economics. Hume’s observation that normative conclusions cannot be derived from purely factual premises — the ‘is-ought problem’ — established the philosophical basis for treating facts and values as categorically distinct. In economics, this translated into the influential positivist programme of strict separation between positive and normative analysis (Robbins 1932; Friedman 1953), which remains influential in how economics is taught and practised today (e.g. Acemoglu et al. 2019, 39; Mankiw 2024, 26–27). Yet this strict separation has been extensively and convincingly challenged, notably by Putnam (2002) and by institutionalist scholars such as Veblen (2011, 279) and Myrdal (1944), as well as feminist scholars such as Haraway (1988) and Harding (1993; see also Reiss 2017; Matecka 2021; Holman and Wilholt 2022 for a summary of arguments against the value-free ideal). For any movement that operates simultaneously in scholarly and advocacy registers, the tenability of this distinction is not merely a philosophical question but a structural one. The challenge is best understood by considering the threefold distinction made by Hodgson (1993), who characterises two extreme positions before identifying a more defensible middle ground. The first, which one can call *hermetic separation*, is the view that facts and values can and should be clearly separated. According to this view, scientific work should produce value-free and objective knowledge, which can then enter a separate normative debate about the implications of this objective knowledge. This is the classical positivist position, and it has been the dominant view in economics for a long time, not only for research but also its teaching (e.g., Acemoglu et al. 2019, 39; Mankiw 2024, 26–27).

On the other side of the spectrum is what one could call the *Rortyan collapse*, which assumes that, first, a strict separation of facts and values is impossible, and, second, that factual statements and normative statements are therefore epistemologically equivalent (Rorty 1980, 723; for an early endorsement in heterodox economics see, e.g., Bush 1993).³

³ This position is often attributed to the following statement in Rorty (1980, 723): “There is no epistemological difference between truth about what ought to be and truth about what is, nor any metaphysical difference between facts and values, nor any methodological difference between morality and science.” (p. 723). One has to acknowledge, however, that Rorty himself has developed a more nuanced position elsewhere; so

If this inference holds, the distinction between a scholarly and an advocacy register collapses: there is no longer a meaningful difference between an epistemological justification for pluralism and a political one.

Hodgson (1993) rejects both positions and argues for a reflected intermediate position, which he associates with classical institutionalist scholars such as Veblen (2011) or Myrdal (1944) (and that is also elaborated by more recent feminist scholarship, e.g., Haraway (1988) or Harding (2015)): the acknowledgment that non-epistemic values cannot be avoided in any research, but that there is still a distinction between factual and normative statements that can - and should - be made. In this chapter I follow Hodgson (1993) in defending the third middle position as the most tenable and practical one.

3.2 The failure of the extremes

The first of the two extreme positions on the fact-value distinction is that a strict separation between the two is possible and desirable. This position is widespread in mainstream economics and goes back to the prominent definition of economics as “the science which studies human behaviour as a relationship between ends and scarce means which have alternative uses” in Robbins (1932). It has been advocated by scholars such as Friedman (1953), and is still at the heart of how economics is currently taught (e.g., Acemoglu et al. 2019, 39; Mankiw 2024, 26–27). Outside economics, including the philosophy of science, this position is unpopular, especially after conclusive criticism by scholars such as Sen (1987) or Putnam (2002): core economic concepts, such as Pareto efficiency or the welfare theorems, embed normative commitments that cannot be excised without changing what is actually being analyzed (Putnam 2002; Sen 1987). Notably, Reiss (2017) has shown that value judgements enter social scientific work at so many independent junctures that maintaining the value-free ideal requires denying not one but a large number of individually compelling arguments. It is, therefore, worth noting that the economics textbook version of this position — which presents positive and normative economics as cleanly separable (e.g., Acemoglu et al. 2019, 39; Mankiw 2024, 26–27) — is more extreme than what even philosophically committed proponents of the view, such as McMullin (1982), would defend. Therefore, the practical relevance of hermetic separation for this chapter lies not in its philosophical defensibility, which is low, but in the fact that it continues to shape how many economists understand their own practice — and thereby how they receive pluralist arguments, often classifying them as advocacy by default.

The more interesting case is the opposite extreme: a thoroughgoing anti-foundationalism that infers from the culturally situated nature of all knowledge that epistemological criteria cannot be meaningfully separated from political or normative preferences. While Richard Rorty explicitly rejected the label of “relativist” and generally holds a more nuanced position, many scholars, including Bush (1993) and Hodgson (1993), refer to his philosophy as the intellectual anchor for this view. In a simplified form, the argument goes as follows: if there

while this collapse position is practically relevant, one should not mistake Richard Rorty for entirely supporting it himself.

is no practice-transcending, epistemologically privileged standpoint, then selecting theories by normative alignment is no less rationally defensible than selecting them by analytical merit—because what counts as “(analytical) merit” is itself just a reflection of community values. At first sight, this appears to open up a straightforward justification for greater plurality: if economic models necessarily embed value commitments in their selection of categories, methods, and criteria of relevance, then a multiplicity of value-laden frameworks is not a defect but an epistemological necessity. Different theoretical frameworks would then simply illuminate different aspects of economic reality by foregrounding different questions and values.

But this inference is problematic, and accepting it carries a cost that the pluralism movement should be unwilling to pay. A pragmatic version of the deeper philosophical argument is given by Hodgson (1993), who argues that embracing this relativistic reasoning is self-undermining for non-mainstream research programs as the pluralism movement’s central charge against mainstream economics is *analytical deficiency*—overreliance on particular methods, neglect of relevant phenomena, and inadequate engagement with complexity. This charge is only intelligible if *analytical deficiency* is a meaningful, cross-paradigmatic category. The relativistic collapse denies this, and thereby saws off the branch the movement is sitting on.

The philosophically more elaborated counter-argument is based on more recent work in the area of perspectival realism (esp. Massimi 2022) and targets the relativistic inference rather than its starting point: even if all inquiry is perspectival and value-laden as Rorty points out, the inference that all of them are epistemically equivalent does not follow: the presence of values in inquiry does not dissolve the distinction between better and worse epistemic warrant — it means only that warrant must be assessed cross-perspectively rather than from a spurious neutral standpoint.⁴ The upshot is that perspectival value-ladenness and epistemic discriminability are compatible: the task is not to purge values from inquiry but to assess warrant cross-perspectively — a process that presupposes, rather than undermines, the distinction between better and worse epistemic grounds.

3.3 The nuanced middle position expanded

If both extreme positions are untenable, the task is to articulate a defensible middle ground. Here I follow Hodgson (1993) in his endorsement of the strategy pioneered by scholars such as Veblen (2011) or Myrdal (1944), who do not pretend to argue from an objective or value-free standpoint. Rather they try to communicate their value premises as explicitly as possible, and distinguish carefully between what they establish empirically or theoretically

⁴ For other philosophical critiques of the Rortyan argument see, e.g., Putnam (2002) and his argument that Rorty mistakenly deflates the concept of truth, Haack (1998) and her critique that Rorty’s pragmatism collapses the distinction between genuine inquiry and mere persuasion, Kitcher (2001) for a realist account of science that acknowledges the role of social values without abandoning cross-perspectival epistemic standards, and Habermas (2003) for a “pragmatic realism” that preserves the perspectival, discursive character of justification while rejecting the inference to global relativism.

and what they derive from their normative priors. In his well-known analysis of racial inequality, for instance, Myrdal (1944) explicitly declared his normative premise — that racial inequality is a moral problem — right from the outset, before proceeding to his empirical analysis and his conclusions are derived from these priors and the analysis alone. Here, the declaration, as well as the clarification of the implied methodological changes, did not compromise his analysis, to the contrary: it clarified what kind of claim was being made and on what grounds. Note that this strategy aligns closely with what would later become *feminist standpoint theory*, which builds on Donna Haraway’s concept of “situated knowledges” (Haraway 1988), according to which all knowledge claims are produced from particular positions rather than from a disembodied universality, and was developed further by Sandra Harding and her idea of “strong objectivity”, according to which acknowledging socially situated starting points improves, rather than diminishes, the rigor of scientific inquiry (Harding 1993). More recently, Harding (2015) has extended this argument to show that epistemic diversity — the inclusion of perspectives shaped by different social locations — is not merely a political concession but a condition for more adequate scientific knowledge, a claim that resonates directly with the debate about PiE and the perspectival realist framework developed below.

This middle position restates the problem rather than dissolving it, however. Acknowledging that value influences are inevitable, leads to the new question of which of them are epistemically permissible and which are not (Holman and Wilholt 2022). The Veblen-Myrdal norm of explicit premise declaration and the idea of strong objectivity are necessary conditions for answering this question but they are not sufficient on their own: declaring a premise does not automatically make it epistemically warranted. A more complete answer requires specifying the conditions under which value-laden inquiry remains assessable and comparable. To this end, the philosophy of perspectival realism is important.

Perspectival realism stresses that all scientific knowledge is produced from a particular *perspective* (see, e.g., Giere 2006; Massimi 2022). Such a perspective is not essentialist (i.e., determined solely by the scholars’ identity or race, for instance), but is determined by the instruments, theoretical frameworks, methodological commitments, and background assumptions of the scholars’ particular scientific community at a particular time, including her own normative commitments that shape what counts as salient, relevant, or problematic. But the acknowledgment that knowledge is always perspectival does not entail that all knowledge is equivalent. It also does not make the knowledge purely subjective: a perspective shapes what can be seen, measured, and inferred, but this does not entail that its object is merely constructed by the observer. Because this view assumes that the target of inquiry retains an independence from the observer, it remains fundamentally realist. Earlier accounts - especially the prominent contribution of Giere (2006), remained ambiguous as to what extent perspectives can be compared or triangulated. Massimi (2022) addresses this directly by grounding the comparability of perspectives in the mind-independent features of the phenomena they are directed at — perspectives can therefore be assessed, compared, and ranked in terms of adequacy without requiring a neutral standpoint from which to do so.[^][The overall argument here is kept brief; for a

comprehensive introduction to Massimi's work, its relevance for the pluralism in economics debate, and a respective justification of pluralism, see Gräbner-Radkowsch (2026).]

The stakes of choosing between the relativist collapse and a defensible middle position become particularly vivid when one considers the epistemological claims of scholars working from structurally marginalized positions. And it is also in this context where perspectives realism becomes important: Go (2016) develops a postcolonial variant of perspectival realism that argues that the structural exclusion of perspectives rooted in colonial and postcolonial experience produces systematic epistemic distortion in the social sciences — not merely political injustice but genuine analytical gaps. Phenomena that are visible from marginalised standpoints (such as the epistemic consequences of colonial knowledge hierarchies, or the analytical limitations of frameworks developed exclusively within metropolitan intellectual traditions) are systematically missed by perspectives that lack this positionality. Crucially, this is an empirical, truth-tracking claim: it asserts that (non-essentialist) marginalised perspectives illuminate features of the social world that dominant perspectives miss, and that this illumination can in principle be demonstrated through cross-perspectival comparison. Crucially, this claim depends on the fact-value distinction remaining operative. If the Rortyan collapse is accepted and all perspectives are treated as epistemically equivalent, Go's argument loses its critical force: the assertion that colonial exclusion produces epistemic distortion becomes indistinguishable from the political assertion that marginalised voices deserve inclusion.

The remaining question is how statements derived from different perspectives are to be compared and assessed in practice. The answer proposed here combines two elements: a procedural prior filter drawn from Longino (2002), and a standard of cross-perspectival adequacy drawn from Massimi (2022), generalised here from models to research programmes.⁵ Together they constitute a two-stage process — a *perspectival adequacy assessment* — that allows pluralism to be maintained without sacrificing the possibility of quality evaluation.

The first stage uses a procedural criterion and works as a prior filter. It specifies the social conditions under which a knowledge creation process becomes appropriately assessable in the first place. To be taken seriously, these processes should meet certain criteria (Longino 2002; Gräbner and Strunk 2020): venues for criticism exist, criticism is actually taken up, standards are transparent, and intellectual authority within the community is not determined by social position. From this, it follows that scholars must declare the purpose of their inquiry, maintain venues for criticism, and respond to it. This stage filters out arguments that are not meeting the basic criteria of the scholarly register at all, or that are not making their normative premises explicit. Crucially, this stage does not require interaction between frameworks — it can be applied to each framework independently (the practical implications are discussed in Section 5).

⁵ This generalisation is discussed in detail in Gräbner-Radkowsch (2026).

The second stage is then the evaluation of what Massimi (2022) calls *cross-perspectival adequacy*: among frameworks that pass the prior filter, cross-perspectival convergence can count as evidence of reliability, while persistent divergence may indicate either unresolved error or genuinely different dimensions of the phenomenon. Thus, adequacy standards now emerge from the *intersection* of perspectives — when multiple independent perspectives converge on the same phenomenon from different angles, the convergence itself is evidence of reliability. Standards are not applied from outside but generated from within the practice of cross-perspectival comparison. This process is demanding as it requires a much closer interaction between perspectives than in stage one, where interaction is minimal, but it is facilitated by the explicit declaration of the purposes of inquiry demanded in the first stage, which makes comparison more tractable (regarding the practical implication, see Section 5).

Together, the two stages constitute what might be called a *perspectival adequacy assessment*: a process that can be used – *inter alia* – which value influences on inquiry are epistemically permissible — the question Holman and Wilholt (2022) pose — without requiring value-freedom or licensing the equivalence of all value-laden perspectives. Value influences are permissible when they are declared, open to criticism, and do not prevent cross-perspectival convergence on the phenomena at issue. This is the constructive, pluralist alternative to both hermetic separation and the Rortyan collapse.

4. Register-Mixing, Conflation, and Their Degrees

4.1 From philosophical diagnosis to empirical pattern

The previous section established that both extreme positions on the fact-value distinction are untenable, and that a defensible middle position, that allows on to keep the scholarly and advocacy registers operationally distinct, exists. The present section discusses how the distinction between registers may nevertheless fail in practice, and what lessons should be drawn from this.

Two analytical distinctions are important in this context. The first concerns the type of philosophical error involved. The *scientistic trap* is the move characteristic of the hermetic-separation position: presenting normatively loaded conclusions as if they were the direct, value-free outputs of scientific analysis (or neglecting their relevance from the start). The *relativistic trap* is the move characteristic of the Rortyan collapse: treating epistemological and normative warrant as equivalent, so that paradigm selection or theoretical commitment can be defended on grounds that the position itself denies are distinctively epistemic.

The second distinction concerns the locus of the error: it can occur within an individual text, where claims of one type are presented under the warrant of the other; or at the level of paradigm selection by the movement, where the choice of which frameworks to endorse is presented as epistemically warranted but operates on grounds the scholarly register cannot endorse. The two distinctions are orthogonal in principle, and all four combinations are possible. The cases discussed in this section are concentrated in one cell of this matrix: the

within-text manifestation, where the scientistic trap appears in worked applications. This is because the relativistic trap appears most clearly in philosophical articulations (e.g., Gala et al. 2012) rather than in applied work, and the paradigm-selection question as such is contested - see Gräbner and Strunk (2020) for a more extensive discussion.

Thus, here I focus on the directional recruitment of scholarly authority to confer scientific legitimacy on positions whose warrant is substantially normative - something this chapter calls epistemic capture. Epistemic capture is qualitatively distinct from the structural entanglement established in Section 2.3, not merely an intensified version of it. Structural entanglement is symmetric and non-culpable: it arises from the subject matter and the conditions of inquiry, and affects all actors in a policy-relevant discipline regardless of intention. Epistemic capture names a more specific act: the functional use of scholarly authority for conclusions that have not been earned through the epistemic standards the scholarly register demands. The relevant asymmetry is not merely that one register influences the other, but that the prestige of the scholarly register is recruited to do advocacy work it has not warranted. This is also why epistemic capture is not a pathology specific to the PiE movement: the same directional recruitment is at work in mainstream economics, when economists derive specific distributional or institutional prescriptions from models whose normative commitments are presented as technical assumptions, or when the authority of the profession is invoked to legitimate particular arrangements as efficient or inevitable.

4.2 Register collapse in practice

Most cases of register collapse in the PiE movement are not strategic but enacted within texts that present themselves as scholarly contributions. Their immediate sources are the structural conditions discussed in Section 2.3: the fact that the subject matter fuses fact and value, that the same actors traverse both registers, and that audiences assign authority based on perceived source rather than warrant claimed. Where these conditions produce mere blurring without directional recruitment, the result is structural entanglement, not epistemic capture. The cases discussed here cross that threshold: scholarly authority is invoked, directly or indirectly, for conclusions whose warrant is substantially normative, but without the deliberate philosophical endorsement of register collapse that distinguishes the strategic case discussed in the next section.

A relatively mild example is the *Exploring Economics* Vision Statement, which occupies an ambiguous genre territory: it operates on an academic-facing educational platform, but frames pluralism instrumentally toward normative goals.⁶ The problem with the Vision

⁶ “By presenting and spreading alternative ideas about the economy, we seek to change the economic thinking of today’s youth and transform the economy of tomorrow into a more environmentally and socially sustainable system.” (Exploring Economics 2026). A general orientation toward social-ecological transformation is not in itself a problem; such a direction can be read as a response to strong empirical findings about ecological limits and social inequality, and becomes normatively contested primarily at the level of specific goals, instruments, and the burdens they impose.

Statement is that the text does not separate the epistemological basis of pluralism from the normative desirability of those political ends, leaving readers without the resources to assess which claims rest on epistemic warrant and which on normative commitment. This is not academic misconduct, but the ubiquitous background condition against which the more directional cases below stand out.

A more visible manifestation is Hickel et al. (2022) in *Nature*. The authors leverage the prestige of a high-impact science journal to advance a particular socioeconomic policy programme. Through a rhetorical structure that implicitly demands audiences “listen to the science”, the piece presents an irreducibly normative programme as though it were the direct, necessary deduction from empirical climate data. This illustrates how the advocacy register can successfully appropriate the formatting and authority of the scholarly register. The point is not to deny that degrowth scholarship has produced important insights, often correcting an overly optimistic techno-optimism in more conventional treatments of the growth-environment-development nexus; it is that once concrete and wide-ranging policy proposals are derived as if they were purely scientific conclusions, the register distinction has broken down in a way that carries costs for the movement’s broader credibility. This becomes particularly clear when such texts are mobilised in social media discussions as scientific proof for the correctness of a particular political project.

A less extreme version appears in Kate Raworth’s *Doughnut Economics* (2017). As Schokkaert (2019) points out, quite sympathetically, Raworth consistently presents deeply normative commitments regarding human flourishing and distributional justice as though they were objective scientific facts dictated by planetary boundaries and the social sciences. Moreover, while she applies high methodological bars to results that conflict with her vision of a good economy — such as her (correct) critique that some countries pollute less when getting richer does not necessarily indicate a causal effect — she requires considerably less methodological rigour for results that support her vision, such as the (contested) relationship between equality and environmental preservation. This asymmetry would be acceptable in an advocacy document, but the presentation of *Doughnut Economics* consistently draws on the academic authority of its author in ways that blur this distinction.

These cases are relevant to the PiE movement even though their authors do not all argue explicitly from a pluralist viewpoint. The movement’s epistemological case for pluralism is premised on the superiority of a richer, more realistic set of economic frameworks; if approaches such as degrowth and Doughnut Economics — frequently invoked by the movement as illustrations of what pluralism makes possible — themselves collapse the scholarly and advocacy registers, the movement inherits these epistemic vulnerabilities regardless of whether individual pluralism advocates endorse the specific policy conclusions involved. The directional pattern matters precisely because the works in question carry scholarly authority: the higher the authority invoked, the greater the epistemic cost when normative premises go unflagged.

4.3. The strategic collapse

The most important contribution to the present discussion comes not from a practitioner of epistemic capture but from a structural critic of the conditions that generate pressure toward it. Decker (2019) diagnoses the same register tension that this chapter analyses, but the argument as he develops it leads to a different conclusion about its implications: that the structural conditions of the PiE movement make maintaining register separation practically untenable for a movement with counter-hegemonic ambitions. The object of critique in what follows is therefore not Decker's broader analytical commitments but the Gramscian premise on which his analysis rests, and the conclusions that premise generates when applied to the movement's strategic situation. It is also worth noting that the counter-hegemonic ambition Decker ascribes to the movement is most accurately attributed to its more activist strand rather than to its membership broadly — a point that his analysis tends to understate, and one that matters because the paradoxes he identifies bite differently depending on whether the movement's self-understanding is primarily epistemological or primarily political.

Decker's argument rests on a Gramscian premise: replacing mainstream economics is not a scientific but a political project. In this view, at least the more activist strand of the PiE movement is engaged in a "counter-hegemonic" struggle.⁷ If one accepts this premise, it follows that discursive-institutional change in science must be linked to broader societal change and that epistemic and political arguments are necessarily intertwined. Decker (2019) then identifies two structural paradoxes that, according to his view, paralyze the PiE movement:

1. The Neutrality Trap (building on Langhe 2010): Decker argues that pluralism cannot align politically without undermining pluralism itself. According to this view, pluralism defines itself by its openness to diverse perspectives, so it is "obliged to maintain a neutral position and cannot become an element in a broader, transformative project" (Decker 2019, 257). For Decker, the movement's definitional commitment to epistemic neutrality is not a scientific virtue but a strategic incapacity (p. 256): because it forecloses the very political alliances necessary to change the institutions of economics so that a sustainable increase in plurality could be achieved in the first place.
2. The Disciplinary Trap: Decker observes that pluralism's self-definition is bounded by the discipline of economics, yet a genuine counter-hegemonic challenge to mainstream economics would require transcending that disciplinary boundary. The

⁷ Counter-hegemony, in the Gramscian sense invoked by Decker (2019), refers to the project of challenging and displacing the dominant ideas and institutional arrangements of a given order — not primarily through political force but through the contestation of intellectual and cultural authority. Applied to economics, it frames this strand of the PiE movement not as a technical debate about methodology but as a struggle to replace the ideas and institutions that legitimate mainstream economics as the default framework for policy and public reasoning. Accepting this framing is itself a substantive theoretical commitment, not a neutral description.

movement simultaneously defines itself against a specific discipline while restricting its focus to it, thereby undercutting the transdisciplinary ambition it also claims to champion.

Paradox 1, in particular, captures a profound structural dilemma: the problem is not merely that political alignment is risky for academics, but that it appears definitionally incompatible with what pluralism — if justified from an epistemological point of view — claims to be.⁸ However, his conclusion depends on his Gramscian premise — the assumption that epistemic and political struggles are inseparable in principle, and that no sustainable change in economics can occur without embedding it in a broader political transformation. This is a contestable theoretical assumption, not a self-evident structural observation. In Decker (2019), the premise functions as an axiom from which the paradoxes are derived, rather than as a perspectival commitment that would itself need to be submitted to the community-level process of cross-perspectival comparison. This does not make it wrong, but it does mean that the conclusion drawn from it — that maintaining register separation is strategically untenable — inherits the unexamined status of its premise.

Decker (2019) should therefore be positioned not as a practitioner of epistemic capture but as a structural critic whose diagnosis of the movement's tensions I largely accept, but whose remedy — the conclusion his analysis points toward — I do not. The PiE movement does indeed face a severe tension between epistemic credibility and political coalition-building. However, the solution is not to abandon epistemic neutrality in favour of full counter-hegemonic commitment. As I will argue below, the “neutrality trap” dissolves once we establish a workable division of labour based on register transparency. When scholarly and advocacy functions are assigned to different registers — even when operated by the same people at different times — scholarly credibility is maintained by keeping scholarly work epistemologically disciplined, while advocacy handles coalition-building. Decker's paradox only bites if both functions must be performed simultaneously and in the exact same register — and the Gramscian premise assumes this rather than establishing it.

5. The Constructive Proposal

5.1 Register transparency as the solution to *structural entanglement*

The challenge of *structural entanglement* cannot be eliminated since the conditions that generate it are fixed. What can be addressed is its unreflective character. The appropriate response is register transparency: making explicit which register one is operating in, what kind of warrant one is claiming, and acting consistently in accordance with the norms of that

⁸ One issue with Decker's elaboration is that he implicitly assumes that pluralism automatically means that claims for greater plurality in certain dimensions — which he does not explicate — are justified via epistemological reasons. This is not fundamentally wrong for considerable parts of the pluralism discourse, but certainly not for all, and taking into account this important nuance makes the whole debate more complex.

register. This is not a demand for value-freedom but the Myrdal norm applied institutionally — the requirement that normative premises be declared openly enough that epistemic and normative components can be assessed independently, and that the norms governing one's activity — fallibilism in the scholarly register, commitment in the advocacy register — be actually operative rather than merely declared. Weber's argument in *Wissenschaft als Beruf* (1919) is related: scholarly authority derives precisely from the self-imposed discipline of bracketing value judgements within scholarly work, which is not a counsel of political abstinence but a condition of credibility. The scholarly register's norms are what make its outputs useful to the advocacy register; departing from them in the name of political commitment undermines the very authority one is trying to mobilise. The practical bar this sets is modest: advocacy documents should not present political commitments as scientific findings; scholarly publications should not import advocacy-register selection criteria without flagging them; and genre-ambiguous documents — such as the *Exploring Economics* Vision Statement discussed in the previous section — should signal their register explicitly rather than relying on readers to infer it. Because this norm can be institutionalized, it qualifies as a structural solution: editorial standards, explicit framing conventions, and movement-level house style can all support it. Several tools from the open science movement — pre-registration of theoretical commitments, transparent reporting of analytical decisions, and peer review formats that evaluate procedural rigour independently of results (e.g., Nosek et al. 2015) — offer inspirations for practical means of institutionalizing these conditions. The apparent modesty of the proposal should not, however, be mistaken for triviality: it directly contradicts the Gramscian premise that epistemic and political struggles are inseparable in principle, and it rejects the strategic conclusion that the movement must sacrifice epistemic neutrality for political effectiveness. What distinguishes register transparency from generic calls for scholarly integrity is that it has determinate content grounded in the perspectival adequacy assessment developed in Section 3 — it demands not value-freedom but value-transparency, so that the epistemic and normative components of any argument can be assessed independently.

This is a very important point: register transparency does *not* require scholars to be apolitical, nor does it treat political situatedness as an epistemic liability. A scholar who investigates how solidarity-based economic arrangements spread and stabilize, declares her normative commitment to solidarity as an explicit premise, and then applies rigorous scientific methods to the question has fully met the Myrdal norm. Her work is no less scholarly for being politically motivated; what makes it scholarly is that the normative premise is declared and the empirical and normative components can be assessed independently. This is the positive case that the division of labour is designed to protect. The problem in the cases examined in Section 4 is *not* political engagement but unmarked validity shifts — the substitution of normative warrant for epistemic warrant without flagging the substitution.

Register transparency also requires distinguishing between two types of advocacy that are easily conflated. The first is what one might call *epistemically grounded institutional advocacy*: calling, within the scholarly register, for changes to journal standards, hiring practices, or curricula on the grounds that existing institutions produce monism and thereby impair the knowledge-generating capacity of the discipline (e.g., Gräbner and Strunk 2020).

The warrant of this call is epistemological even if its form is political, and it represents the division of labour between registers functioning correctly: the scholarly register produces the epistemic argument; the advocacy register applies pressure to change institutions on its basis. The second type is *normatively motivated theoretical advocacy*: selecting specific theoretical frameworks because they support preferred political conclusions, and presenting that selection as epistemologically mandated. This is what *epistemic capture* names. The error is not the advocacy but the substitution of normative alignment for epistemic adequacy as the criterion of theoretical selection. Register transparency requires keeping these two types of advocacy visibly distinct.

What distinguishes the present proposal from the counter-hegemonic programme discussed in Decker (2019) is not a rejection of political engagement but a rejection of the Gramscian premise that epistemic and political struggles are inseparable in principle. Epistemically grounded institutional advocacy is political in form and epistemological in warrant — it is perfectly compatible with maintaining the scholarly register’s norms. What the division of labour resists is the stronger claim that the two registers must ultimately collapse into a single counter-hegemonic project. That claim is an assumption built into Decker’s framework, not a structural necessity it establishes.

5.2 Individual epistemic discipline as the response to *epistemic capture*

Epistemic capture does not have a structural solution of the same kind as the structural entanglement challenge. No institutional arrangement alone can prevent an actor from deploying the prestige of the scholarly register to secure conclusions that are in fact normative. The response must be individual — a matter of epistemic discipline — supported by social-epistemic community norms that actively name and resist the pattern when it occurs.

The relevant norm here is the Veblen-Myrdal practice carried into the evaluation of theoretical frameworks: selection of frameworks should be justified by what Massimi (2022) calls cross-perspectival adequacy — the second stage of the perspectival adequacy assessment developed in Section 3 — rather than by normative alignment. The operative question is whether a given framework illuminates features of economic reality that other frameworks miss, not whether it supports politically preferred conclusions. These two questions can coincide, but they are not equivalent, and the conflation between them is precisely what *epistemic capture* names. Calling it out is not always comfortable, because epistemologically warranted pluralism can be politically inconvenient: if the selection criterion is genuinely epistemic, then frameworks whose political valence is uncongenial — agent-based modelling, Austrian economics, formal mechanism design — have as much claim to inclusion as those the movement tends to favour. Accepting this is the price of epistemic consistency.⁹

⁹ This is also one reason why pluralist research is genuinely difficult. Assessing and comparing knowledge claims across paradigms that differ not only in their conclusions but in their categories, methods, and criteria of relevance requires sophisticated comparative skills that conventional disciplinary training rarely

The individual character of this solution does not mean it is unsupported. Longino (2002) provides the social-epistemic framework: the norms are operationalised at the community level through venues for criticism, uptake of that criticism, transparent standards, and the decoupling of intellectual authority from social position. A movement that takes *epistemic capture* seriously must cultivate these conditions actively — in peer review, in editorial practice, and in public intellectual culture — rather than leaving the enforcement of the scholarly register’s norms to individual good intentions alone. But this does not exempt individuals from the normative need to follow these norms accordingly. Uskali Mäki’s career provides a useful proof of concept that the separation is not merely theoretical, but practically feasible. His contributions to the philosophy of economics — on scientific realism, on the methodology of isolation, and on the foundations of pluralism — have been among the most influential in shaping the scholarly debate about pluralism. That influence is inseparable from the register discipline he exercises, and it is worth emphasising that his advancement of the pluralism movement has been achieved through exactly this discipline rather than in spite of it: his foundational philosophical work has been conducted entirely within the scholarly register, meeting the conditions Stage 1 requires: explicit statement of premises, responsiveness to criticism, and independence from political alignment. His co-authorship of the 1992 plea for pluralism published in the *American Economic Review* [Hodgson et al. (1992)], by contrast, is a case of epistemically grounded institutional advocacy conducted in the advocacy register: a public call for changes to disciplinary institutions, warranted by epistemological argument. The two activities are kept distinct, and neither compromises the other. This is the division of labour functioning as intended at the level of the individual scholar, and it demonstrates that the separation is practicable, not merely aspirational.

5.3 The epistemological grounding: perspectival adequacy assessment

The constructive proposal rests on the epistemological framework developed in Section 3, and the core commitments need not be restated here. What remains is to draw out their implications for the division of labour specifically. The perspectival adequacy assessment — the two-stage process combining Longino’s procedural prior filter with Massimi’s cross-perspectival adequacy — does two things that are essential to the proposal. First, it licenses pluralism without collapsing into relativism: the framework holds that perspectives can be partial and value-laden while still being assessable, comparable, and rankable in terms of adequacy. The presence of values in inquiry does not make all value-laden frameworks equivalent. Second, it provides the epistemological grounding for the critical distinction in Section 5.1 between epistemically warranted institutional advocacy and normatively motivated theoretical advocacy: what makes a case for pluralism epistemologically grounded is precisely that it can be submitted to the two-stage process and survive it — that the frameworks advocated for pass the procedural filter and demonstrate cross-

cultivates. It is one of the stronger arguments for pluralist economics education: not merely that exposure to diverse frameworks broadens the student’s analytical toolkit, but that it develops precisely the cross-perspectival competence that epistemically responsible pluralism demands.

perspectival adequacy relative to the phenomena they are intended to illuminate. Stage 1 in particular has a practical institutional dimension: the conditions Longino specifies — transparent standards, venues for criticism, responsiveness to objections — can be supported through concrete mechanisms (see, for instance, the inspirations from the open science movement mentioned above in Section 5.1).

The sharpest illustration of what is lost when this grounding is abandoned remains the example introduced in Section 3.3: Go (2016)'s postcolonial perspectival realism. The claim that colonial exclusion produces epistemic distortion — that structurally marginalised perspectives illuminate features of the social world that central perspectives systematically miss — is a truth-tracking empirical claim. It depends on the fact-value distinction remaining operative: it asserts not 'merely' that marginalised perspectives are politically preferable but that they are epistemically informative in ways that can in principle be demonstrated through cross-perspectival convergence. If the distinction collapses, the claim collapses with it into a political assertion, eliminating the critical force of postcolonial *epistemology*. This shows that the fact-value distinction is not an obstacle to politically engaged scholarship. It is its condition of possibility.

5.4 Division of labour: answering Decker's Paradox 1

The division of labour between scholarly and advocacy registers is not a novel institutional arrangement but a clarification of what the two registers already require of those who operate in them. Actors in the scholarly register produce epistemologically disciplined arguments for pluralism; their credibility, and thereby their usefulness to the broader movement, depends on not aligning politically within that register. Actors in the advocacy register create institutional space, build coalitions, and make political arguments for reform. Their effectiveness depends on not presenting political arguments as scientific findings, because doing so would undermine the epistemic authority they were trying to mobilise. Neither function can be performed well if it is colonized by the norms of the other.

The crucial clarification — which is also the direct answer to Decker's Paradox 1 — is that these are not different people but different functions performed by the same people at different times. The division of labour is a division of function, not of personnel. Decker's neutrality trap bites only if both functions must be performed simultaneously and in the same register: if the scholar, in order to build the political alliances pluralism requires, must align politically in her scholarly work itself. But this assumption is precisely what the division of labour contests — and it is, as argued in Section 5.1, a consequence of Decker's Gramscian premise rather than a proven structural necessity. Once scholarly and advocacy functions are assigned to different registers, the apparent dilemma dissolves: scholarly credibility is maintained by keeping scholarly work epistemologically disciplined; advocacy handles coalition-building; and the movement as a whole is stronger for having both functions performed well rather than both performed in a single, epistemically compromised mode.

The practical test is not whether the same person can hold both commitments abstractly, but whether the two functions can be performed in sequence with the register shift declared — whether the scholar who signs a public letter on Monday returns to the seminar room on Tuesday with the shift visible and the premises of each activity made explicit. The risk is not political situatedness as such but unmarked validity shifts: the silent importation of normative premises into scholarly work, or the deployment of scholarly authority for conclusions whose warrant is substantially normative. This risk is present in mainstream economics as much as in the PiE movement — which is precisely why the response is a norm of transparency rather than a demand for political neutrality. The claim here is not that maintaining the distinction is easy, but that it is structurally possible — and that collapsing both functions into a single register is demonstrably worse for both.

The perspectival adequacy assessment provides the epistemological grounding for this claim. Stage 1 ensures that scholarly work is transparent about its premises and responsive to criticism; Stage 2 generates adequacy standards from cross-perspectival convergence rather than from normative consensus. A scholarly community that operates by these standards can be politically diverse in its individual members' commitments while remaining epistemically coherent in its collective outputs — precisely the condition under which advocacy conducted in the advocacy register can draw on scholarly authority without undermining it.

5.5 Tensions that must be endured

It would be dishonest to present the division of labour as costless. Two tensions are permanent features of the proposal, not failures of it, and they map directly back onto *epistemic capture* and *structural entanglement* respectively. The solutions developed in this chapter manage those problems — they do not eliminate the structural conditions that generate them.

The first tension maps onto *epistemic capture* at the individual level. Epistemologically warranted pluralism may be politically inconvenient, and the inconvenience is not incidental but structural: if adequacy rather than alignment is the criterion for theoretical inclusion, then frameworks whose conclusions are uncongenial to the movement's political commitments have as strong a claim to inclusion as those it prefers. Actors operating in the advocacy register must either accept this implication or acknowledge openly that their selection criterion is political rather than epistemological. There is no third option that preserves both epistemic consistency and political comfort. This is the permanent cost of taking the scholarly register's norms seriously, and the temptation to avoid it is precisely what the cases examined in Section 4 illustrate.

The second tension maps onto *structural entanglement* at the structural level. The division of labour assumes that the scholarly and advocacy functions can be perceived as distinct by external audiences. But in practice they are performed by the same people, in the same institutions, often in the same week. Can actors in the scholarly register maintain credibility when those in the advocacy register — frequently identical in personnel — are explicitly

engaged in counter-hegemonic struggle? This question is not fully resolvable. Some reputational spillover between the two registers is unavoidable, and no amount of register transparency fully insulates the scholarly function from the political associations of the advocacy function. The best available response is to make register-awareness explicit and consistent, to flag the shift when it occurs, and to accept that the separation is imperfect rather than pretending it is complete. Uskali Mäki again serves as a clear demonstration that the separation is achievable in practice, even if it is never without cost.

It is here that Decker's Paradox 2 — the disciplinary trap — resurfaces and must be acknowledged as genuinely open. The present argument does not claim to resolve the tension between pluralism's disciplinary self-definition and its transdisciplinary ambitions. It claims only that maintaining the fact-value distinction and the register division is a necessary condition for navigating that tension, not a sufficient one. The movement will need to work out, over time, how to hold these two commitments together without collapsing either into the other. What the present argument establishes is that collapsing the registers in the name of strategic necessity makes that navigation harder, not easier: it sacrifices the epistemic authority that gives the movement's scholarly contributions their weight, in exchange for a form of political alignment that the movement's own pluralist commitments cannot consistently sustain.

Both tensions are the permanent cost of taking both registers seriously. The alternative — collapsing the distinction in either direction — is worse for both functions. A movement that has traded epistemic authority for political alignment has lost its strongest argumentative card precisely in the arena where mainstream economics is most vulnerable: the charge of analytical deficiency. That charge is only coherent if analytical deficiency is a meaningful, cross-paradigmatic category. Maintaining the scholarly register's norms is what keeps that category meaningful.

6. Conclusion and outlook

The argument of this chapter began from a simple observation: the PiE movement spans two registers — the scholarly and the advocacy — and this co-existence generates two distinct challenges. The first, *structural entanglement*, arises unavoidably from the subject matter of a policy-relevant discipline and the fact that the same actors traverse both registers; it is not a defect of individuals but a predictable feature of the discursive environment. The second, *epistemic capture*, names a more specific and asymmetric pattern: the recruitment of scholarly authority for conclusions whose warrant is substantially normative. The two problems differ in degree and direction, and they call for correspondingly different responses — register transparency in the first case, individual epistemic discipline supported by community norms in the second. What grounds both responses is the perspectival adequacy assessment developed in Section 3: a two-stage process that licenses pluralism without licensing relativism, and that makes the fact-value distinction operational without requiring a value-free standpoint that no one can occupy.

The chapter has tried to make a constructive case rather than a corrective one. The PiE movement's central diagnosis — that mainstream economics is analytically deficient — is, I believe, substantially right. But that diagnosis is only intelligible if *analytical deficiency* is a meaningful, cross-paradigmatic category, and that requires a viable distinction between epistemic and normative warrant. Collapsing the registers in the name of strategic necessity, as the Gramscian reading discussed in Section 4.3 recommends (or assumes), does not strengthen the movement's position; it concedes the very ground from which its strongest arguments are made. The division of labour proposed here is the alternative: not a division of personnel but a division of function, in which the same scholar can act as a public advocate on Monday and as a fallibilist researcher on Tuesday — provided the shift is declared and the norms appropriate to each register are operative. The introduction promised that my own trajectory would illustrate this argument. It does so only modestly: dedicated chairs for pluralist economics have been a long-standing goal of the movement, and I now hold one — a position that exists primarily because of advocacy-register work done by others, and that can now be used for scholarly-register work in turn (hopefully further supporting advocacy activities by myself and others). That is the division of labour, in one small instance. The two registers are not in tension here. They are mutually indispensable and mutually reinforcing, precisely because they are kept distinct.

Several questions remain open. Decker's Paradox 2 — the tension between pluralism's disciplinary self-definition and its transdisciplinary ambitions — is not resolved by the present argument and warrants sustained treatment elsewhere. The application of perspectival realism to economics, specifically, which has been kept brief here, must be developed elsewhere (Gräbner-Radkowsch 2026). And the institutional mechanisms through which register transparency could be operationalized — editorial standards, peer review formats, movement-level conventions — deserve closer attention than this chapter could offer. What the chapter has tried to establish is narrower: that the registers can be kept distinct, that doing so is epistemically and strategically defensible, and that the movement's own commitments give it good reasons to do so.

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