

TURNINGPOINTS

- Developing an Ethical Economy -

In presocratic philosophy the overarching idea was that everything was a dynamically composed wholeness. All things were alive and full of gods, and so came with certain ethics. This idea created basic problems for the observations of both the external and the internal world, because to observe you need some form of distance. This problem developed to a discussion about what 'was' and 'what was not'. This discussion took different themes and forms, among others it became a discussion about what was 'change' and what was 'indifference' (that which 'was'). The main argument being that you could not observe change and development if there was nothing stable or unchanged.

This discussion about 'what was' and 'what was not' developed into an idea that the observable surface was flux and that underneath this flux there would exist a static material foundation. It was only the different shapes that changed.

This thinking conceived the idea that the material static reality consisted of atoms. These atoms were static, meaning 'unbreakable', which is the meaning of 'a' and 'tomos'. Thus these atoms created a static foundation under all the flux of life. Between these atoms existed only emptiness. This building of matter, forms and life was the creation of a supreme God positioned outside all this. This paradigm led to the emergence of a certain understanding of human consciousness, behaviour, material production, consumption and economy.

In time, this paradigm developed into an understanding that the material body and the spiritual mind were separate substances of very different natures. Outside mass and emptiness, God was the only explanation. Later this paradigm developed into a universe, which was mechanical and in which nature consisted only of 'dead matter'. The universe became a gigantic clockwork, plants were machines, animals were machines and people were machines. This division led to the division into two 'magistrates': the church (belief) and the university (knowledge) and had vast impact on social life in general, but especially so on the human and the natural sciences. They were all very impressed by this mathematical-mechanical development especially within Newton's physics, and as a consequence tried to adapt the physical concepts and methods.

Classical economy also wanted to be scientific and therefore used the newtonian-mechanical concepts in its construction of a new economy taking over from mercantilism. After a first period with classic economy a new period took over; that has been named the neoclassic economical school. This school took the development of the classical economy's concepts and turned them into mathematics and steady models imitating classical physics. One of the main objectives of the neoclassical economy was to rid all economical theory, mathematics and modelling of inherent 'gods' and 'subjectivity'. This way economy also became 'mechanical'. Thus, a central part of this process was to become rid of the subjectivity which also ethics represented. There was only economics, mathematics and models - no gods, no God and no humans or societies.

This economical thinking has shaped the formation of markets, companies, competition, products, services, ownership, leadership and expertise for 150 years now. These basic concepts have also impacted deeply on the life of the individual, the family and on society as a whole. The problem is that the mechanical paradigm cannot explain consciousness, memory, language and behaviour.

Luckily, humanity is facing new fundamental knowledge when it comes to physics, biology, psychology and sociology. In general this new knowledge points to a situation of a shift of paradigms. This is especially strong in the research of quantum physics.

Since 1980s research into quantum physics has proved that atoms do not exist as 'dead matter', but as energy. So, the ancient division into that 'which is' and that 'which is not' is not the answer nature gives to research. Instead it gives an answer in which atoms emerge from what quantum researchers term a 'creative vacuum'. So, quantum physics opens up for new possibilities to understand consciousness, experience, memory, language, behaviour - and how to create a new ethical economy.