

# Foreword

**Alan Peacock**<sup>1</sup>

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Mark is in my thoughts almost daily. That cannot be avoided. Now a nonagenarian – long past the days when a serious contender for professional attention – I only keep by me in my study a few books that betray my career. Pride of place amongst the last of the few is Mark's *Economic Theory in Retrospect*, 4th edition, 1985. There it is, just at eye and hand level, and it would even beat the indispensable *Who's Who in Scotland* in the number of times per week I take it out.

Take any chapter in which Mark examines the work of a reputedly major figure in the history of economics. What is the author trying to do? How does he set out his analysis? Do his conclusions follow from his reasoning and his use of empirical support? What do we learn of relevance to our present concerns about economic conditions? And what is Mark's aim in all this? He is not simply hopeful that appreciation of scholarship encourages us in good habits of reasoning. It is to convince us that the knowledge of the history of economic ideas is a necessary element in the training of an economist. He knew that success in his mission was far from guaranteed, but his influence has ensured that there might be sufficient of us left to keep his cause alive.

Why should I pay particular attention to the 4th edition? Because it was a present from Mark himself. Our professional paths had converged towards the end of our academic careers through a mutual love of the performing and creative arts, and a natural curiosity in what economics could contribute towards the appraisal and design of measures to support them. Indeed, with a few others, notably Ruth, we helped to invent cultural economics.

Mark's present was more than a symbol of our cooperation, or rather of his over-generous recognition of our collaboration. Some time before this (1978) I had tested his patience by joining the recently founded and only independent university, Buckingham, in the UK, to become in time its President. He professed opposition to the whole idea, believing that it embodied a false conception of freedom of thought, and in practice would only survive by catering for the 'cream of society – the rich and

the thick'. Yet he accepted an invitation to join our faculty and to become the chief guarantor of our standards of teaching in economics. The title page of the 4th Edition records that Mark Blaug's academic affiliations were the University of London Institute of Education and the University of Buckingham. I could hardly believe my luck.

## NOTE

1. Alan Peacock is Professor Emeritus in Economics at Buckingham. Both Mark and he became Fellows of the British Academy. Alan Peacock's slim contribution to the history of economic thought consists of his Mattioli Lectures entitled *Public Choice Analysis in Historical Perspective*, Cambridge University Press, 1992.

