

## BOOK REVIEWS

### Economic Theory; General Economics

*Traité d'économie pure*. By MAURICE ALLAIS. 4 vols., rev. (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale. 1952. Pp. 63; 852; annexes, 68. 5,500 fr.)

French spiritual culture was not only the fountainhead of mathematical economics, but also the cradle of the greatest architects of this discipline. Yet France has never been an Arcadia for mathematical economists. Even a Cournot and a Walras were disapproved; Divisia was quietly ignored. In 1952, Maurice Allais had to be content with the reimpression of his wartime publication, *À la recherche d'une discipline économique* (1943), under a new title; the only addition included in the *Traité d'économie pure* is an impressive list of the author's publications and a new introduction.

Had Allais's monumental work been known outside France in 1943, in all probability it would have stirred greater enthusiasm than the 1952 edition. The speed of progress achieved by mathematical economics in the last twenty years made it at times impossible for mathematical economists to keep abreast of all contributions pouring from all sides; parallel and independent results were frequent in Anglo-American literature. But by now, the waters have become clearer and we know that many of Allais's results had been obtained by other economists. However, this alone would hardly justify the lengthy part of the Introduction (I, 12-33) devoted to a *pro domo sua* argument incompatible at least with Anglo-American literary etiquette. The overtones of self-praise seem exaggerated even if intended to subdue the French traditional opposition to the idea of mathematizing man's motives and actions. One can but agree with Allais that the conditions in occupied France prevented him in 1943 from learning of some results known in other countries. However, his impetuous and polemic claim to subjective originality to the point of invoking ignorance of Pareto's *Cours d'économie politique* and *Traité de sociologie générale*, certainly seems inappropriate for an author whose contribution deserves recognition on more legitimate grounds. Allais's alibis reveal what seems to be his true story: a talented and enthusiastic engineer, little acquainted with the economic literature outside France, embarked upon a formidable expedition, *à la recherche d'une discipline économique*. In view of this and the fact that the first edition of the *Traité* is literally an *oeuvre de jeunesse* (it is Allais's first publication), the objectively original contributions of the *Traité* appear so much the more praiseworthy.

Like all other outstanding mathematical economists of the French School, Allais was first attracted by engineering, which in France means to a great extent by mathematics. But Allais can be regarded as perpetuator of French tradition for more substantial reasons. His *Traité* bears the main hallmarks of the writings of his predecessors from Dupuit to Divisia: a blending of imagination and mathematical vision with a keen observation of the per-