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Pages 331-333 | Published online: 21 Dec 2006

Cite this article https://doi.org/10.1080/09535310601020850

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*Economic Systems Research*
*Vol. 18, No. 4, 331–333, December 2006*

# Introduction: the History of Input–Output Analysis, Leontief's Path and Alternative Tracks

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The term 'input–output analysis' is, for well-known reasons, closely associated with the name of Wassily Leontief, widely considered as being the founder of the subject. Leontief's input–output analysis may be seen as epitomized by one of the most frequently repeated equations in the economics literature, namely $\mathbf{x} = \mathbf{Ax} + \mathbf{y}$. Many students of Leontief and practitioners of input–output analysis may have reflected upon the almost paradoxical fact that such a general and wide ranging approach as input–output analysis represents, with a strikingly simple and transparent analytic structure, has been so exclusively associated with the work of a single scholar. In his pioneering contributions Leontief paid homage to François Quesnay but gave few clues as to other predecessors who might have inspired his work.

To place input–output analysis in the context of the history of economic thought requires careful consideration of the development of the ideas constituting input–output analysis. An important step in this direction was made in an earlier special issue of *Economic Systems Research* (Vol.12, No.2, 2000) on input–output analysis and classical economic theory.

At the Fifteenth International Conference on Input–Output Techniques, held in Beijing, 27 June–1 July 2006, a special session, organized by one of the guest editors of this issue, was devoted to the theme 'History of Input–Output Analysis.' The present volume contains the revised versions of four of the papers presented in the special session. The common feature of these papers is that they deal with attempts undertaken independently of, and partly prior to, those of Leontief to come to grips with problems for which input–output analysis provides a suitable framework and powerful tool of the analysis. They may thus all be said to discuss 'alternative tracks' to the path Leontief followed. In addition, there are included two valuable source documents on the background and early life of

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0953-5314 Print/1469-5758 Online/06/040331–3 © 2006 The International Input–Output Association
DOI: 10.1080/09535310601020850

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