

## RHETORIC AND IDEOLOGY IN ECONOMICS TEXTBOOKS: AN OVERVIEW

İKTİSAT DERS KİTAPLARINDA RETORİK VE İDEOLOJİ: GENEL BİR BAKIŞ

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### Abstract

This paper reviews the somewhat disconnected studies on the introductory level economics textbooks. First, specifying the best-sellers, it is argued that there is visible standardization and concentration in the textbook market. Second, studies focusing on the rhetorical and ideological aspects of economics textbooks are reviewed. While the heterodoxy, with determination, asserts that economics is inherently political and ideological, the mainstream, understandably, tends to deny the ideological underpinnings of the economics they do. After coherently reviewing the narrow literature, the paper contributes by pointing out the gap in rhetoric-ideology nexus and suggesting an agenda for future research.

**Keywords:** Economics Textbooks, Ideology, Rhetoric

**JEL Classification:** A11, A2, A22, B20

### Öz

Bu makale, giriş seviyesindeki iktisat ders kitapları üzerine yapılan birbirinden kısmen kopuk çalışmaları incelemektedir. İlk olarak, çok-satan kitapları belirterek, ders kitabı piyasasında gözle görülür bir standartlaşma ve konsantrasyon olduğu tartışılmaktadır. İkinci olarak, iktisat kitaplarının retorik ve ideolojik veçheleri üzerine yapılan çalışmalar değerlendirilmektedir. Heterodoks akademi tereddütsüz bir biçimde iktisadın ideolojik olduğunu öne sürerken ana akım, anlaşılabilir bir şekilde, yaptıkları iktisadın ideolojik temellerini inkâr etme eğilimindedirler. Makale, dar olan literatürü değerlendirdikten sonra, retorik-ideoloji bağlantısındaki boşluğa dikkati çekerek katkıda bulunmakta ve gelecek araştırmalar için bir gündem önerisi getirmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** İktisat Ders Kitapları, İdeoloji, Retorik

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## I. Introduction

In 2012–2013 academic year, 26,832 students were conferred a bachelor's degree in economics in the United States (Snyder and Dillow, 2013). This number goes up to 35,801 when we add other majors directly related to economics such as applied economics, managerial economics, and agricultural economics. All business school students, including business, finance, and accounting majors, take more than a few required economics courses. It is also very common that other social sciences and quite a few of the engineering students take basic economics courses. Some of these students minor in economics, as well. As an anecdotal figure, Brown University has reported, "17% of this year's (2013) graduating seniors had some kind of economics concentration under their belts" (Roose, 2013). Maier (2003) estimates that, in the United States, about one million students take at least one introductory economics course and 750,000 textbooks are sold every year.<sup>1</sup>

Although most economics departments offer a variety of courses from a variety of perspectives, many of these noneconomics majors' contact with economics is very much limited to introductory level macro – and microeconomics courses. Courses like political economy and history of economic thought are rarely offered by economics departments that have a mainstream orientation. Even when they are offered, they are offered as unpopular electives. Also, considering the intermediate-level theory courses are built upon the introductory courses, there is not a variety of ideas and strands taught in mainstream economics departments other than the standard concepts covered in principles courses. Course like "managerial economics" or "industrial organization" are just narrower applications of microeconomics course. Students, by and large, can be regarded as a captive audience for these principles of economics textbooks and instructors. In those respects, textbooks at the introductory level play a more important role than textbooks at any other phase of undergraduate economics teaching. The knowledge imposed by these introductory textbooks is propagated in the media, and in all other professions, which then is spread even to people who have not gone to college (Zuidhof, 2014).

For the sake of the ideology, pluralism of ideas would muddy the waters; hence, concentration of the presented ideas is essential for the effective propagation of the ideology. The first subsection covers the literature showing that there is a high degree of concentration and standardization in the economics textbook market. In the second subsection, featured works on rhetoric and ideology will be covered. Such inquiries would motivate for future research on economics education, textbook writing, and economic ideology.

## 2. The Market and the Textbooks

Paul Samuelson's textbook, *Economics: An introductory analysis* (1948), is considered as the first of the modern textbooks. Although Samuelson's *Economics* has dominated the market for a few decades, by the early 1970s, as new authors and publishers entered the market more assertively

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<sup>1</sup> These are rough estimates, not official data.

with some innovations and improvements, it has started to lose some of its market share (Walstad et al., 1998). Eventually, McConnell's textbook has become the bestselling textbooks with a three-to-one lead over its closest competitors (Carvellas et al., 1995). Gregory Mankiw, who published his first introductory level textbook in 1997, has caught up with McConnell et al. (1990) later in 2000s (Maier, 2003). Nonetheless, it is crucial to state that all these newcomer textbooks were not any different than Samuelson's "gold standard" textbook.

Although there has been some competition in the textbook market, it has been an imperfect one. Stiglitz (1988) argues that in 1980s it was more like a monopolistic competition with too many similar products with slight differentiations in size, level, and organization. Sichel, on the other hand, had opposed this view arguing that there have been market leaders determining the price, and smaller authors and publishers following the leaders with imitations (Walstad et al., 1998). Since contents were more or less the same, the textbooks could have been considered as homogeneous. These features, Sichel suggested, makes the market a better approximation to an oligopolistic one with leaders and followers, instead of a monopolistic competition. Samuelson's long-running leadership could also be considered to be a result of his first-mover advantage started in 1948.

As in most other private businesses, there is not much publicly available detailed information in the textbook market. Market size, sales, and market shares are all proprietary information. Aslanbeigui and Naples (1996) state that the best-selling four texts (Baumol and Blinder, 1979; Byrns and Stone, 1992; Lipsey et al., 1991, McConnell and Brue, 1990) made up to 40-45% of the total market share in early 1990s. They state in their article, that this information comes from their personal conversations with publishers and authors. Lopus and Paringer (2012) give a more recent figure and report that out of 26 principles textbooks, two of them, McConnell et al.'s and Mankiw's latest editions represent more than 40% of the sales. Although the sales figures are, for the most part, confidential information and it is difficult to come up with exact tables and numbers with clear conclusions, just by looking at the above figures, we can conclude that there is a very high market concentration and a conceivably increased Herfindahl index value today, compared to the 1990s.

The research literature on principles of economics textbooks is scarce. Lopus and Paringer (2012) make a general analysis of the textbook market briefly covering all 26 textbooks published in 2009 and later. They find that all 26 textbooks are close in length and their organizational formats are very similar, with only marginal differences. Except for a few, all the textbooks are positioning themselves at middle-level of difficulty to widen their customer spectrum, similar to Hotelling's law. Most of them extend their pedagogical features to online and offline supplementary materials. Lopus and Paringer claim "the mainstream principles today attempt to provide a balanced point of view and do not present the material from a strictly liberal or conservative perspective." However, they show only a few cherry-picked anecdotal examples. Among all textbooks only Colander's and Bowles et al.'s texts could be considered as pluralist, whose market shares would be negligible. Among mainstream textbooks, the ideological spectrum is very narrow. Almost all bestseller

textbooks present the neoclassical synthesis, sometimes called the “bastard Keynesianism,” a hybrid of neoclassical microeconomics and Hicksian IS/LM macroeconomics. Actually, most textbooks do not cover Marxist or post-Keynesian economics at all. In these senses, Lopus and Paringer overplay the suggested pluralism of introductory textbooks with insufficient support for their argument.

Walstad et al. (1998), while discussing the degree of competitiveness in the textbook market, offer a content analysis of leading introductory textbooks. Just like Lopus and Paringer (2012), they discovered that content coverage and other pedagogical features were fairly standard among eight leading textbooks in late 1980s, leading them to conclude that there is a “consensus” textbook. Heilbroner and Galbraith’s (1987), and Baumol and Blinder’s (1979) textbooks stood alone with some lengthy and sympathetic discussion of Marxian economics, while others present little or no coverage at all. They come up with an important conclusion that “textbook adoption decision is somewhat illusory, given the high degree of standardization in the textbooks.” They deduce that there were only marginal differences among the eight leading textbooks they had analyzed.

Carvellas et al. (1995), focusing more on how the size and length of the introductory textbooks have changed over time, also agreed with the aforementioned studies that there is a high degree of uniformity across leading textbooks. They have, very significantly, found that size of the areas where textbooks could be more diverse have dramatically shrunk. Klammer calls these as “to-be-left-out-when-time-runs-out-topics” (2013). Carvellas et al. stated that the two underlying reasons driving this standardization were market forces and institutional considerations. Although marginal costs of textbook publishing are very low, initial sunk investment is high. This automatically deters entry into the market. They also state that professors rarely switch textbooks and graduate students tend to use their professors’ textbooks when they start teaching. This implies that there is a high-level of consumer loyalty, which is hard to break for new entrants. Most of the new and nonmainstream entrants trying to break into the market with different presentation, format, and ideological leanings, like Hunt and Sherman (1975), Alchian and Allen (1972), and Ruffin and Gregory (1986) could not survive in the market. A more assertive and radical attempt was made by Joan Robinson and John Eatwell by publishing their *An Introduction to Modern Economics* in 1973. Although it was a revolutionary book in terms of its pluralist content, organization, and presentation style, only two editions were published (King and Millmow, 2003). Famous economist Edmund Phelps, as well, published an introductory textbook in 1985. He wanted to differentiate his textbook by presenting some nonmainstream political economy perspectives, as well as covering conventional economics theories. Only a few universities had adopted these innovative and quality textbooks. And none of these are in print.

Another attempt came from Bowles et al. (2005) with their *Understanding Capitalism: Competition, Command, and Change*. This is a decent, but nonconventional, textbook from a Marxist political economy perspective. It covers a great deal of history and economic thought. Topics like environmental degradation, income and wealth inequality, poverty, class relationships, and limits to economic growth are not marginal to but at the center of the presentation. As the

title attests, it is a study of actual capitalism, not of some hypothetical free markets with perfectly competitive firms. The first edition of this textbook was published in 1985. The third, which is also the latest, edition was published in 2005, and it is still in print from Oxford University Press. Although its market share is, presumably, negligible, *Understanding Capitalism* still serves as a good alternative to economics professors and students.

In her research, Long (2014) studied modern textbooks in comparison to Marshall's *Principles of Economics*. She found that the modern textbooks are mathematically more technical than Marshall's. Marshall focused more on the concepts and left the mathematical details to the footnotes or appendices, whereas modern texts incorporate mathematics into the text. She also concluded that Marshall narrowed the scope of economics to business activities; however, modern textbooks, starting with Samuelson's, broaden the scope to include almost all human behavior that include a choice that is subject to a constraint. This may be due to, first, trying to make economics look more relevant to increase enrollment and textbooks sales; and second, related to the first one, more efficiently spread the ideology underneath.

To sum up, above studies show that 1) there is a high degree of concentration in the textbook market; 2) the textbooks are very much similar to each other; 3) majority of the textbooks present the neoclassical paradigm only; and 4) Samuelson's textbook could be regarded as the consensus textbook. In the next subsection, the featured studies regarding the rhetorical and ideological aspects will be reviewed.

### 3. Economic Rhetoric vs. Ideology

Beginning with S. W. Jevons, an economist in the nineteenth century, there has been an urge to characterize economics as a positive science. In Jevons's vision, economics was simply a calculus of pleasure and pain, disconnected from the political, institutional, and social aspects (1871). Beyond the emphasis on positivism, Jevons (1871) had proposed a demarcation criterion saying "I contend that all economic writers must be mathematical so far as they are scientific at all" (p. 52). This position is still the dominant view in economics academia. Mathematical elegance in economic models is regarded as more important than the conceptual explanations and verbally expressed theories.

McCloskey, in her revolutionary book *The Rhetoric of Economics* (1998), brought a strident criticism on the widespread use of mathematical models. She claims that economics, as a system of metaphors, was scientific and literary at the same time. Literary arguments and style of persuasion play significant roles in deliberating the findings or explaining the theorems. According to McCloskey, cogency of the law of demand does not come from rigorous proofs. The scientific character of the regressions and statistical analysis are pretty much irrelevant. If the law of demand theoretically makes sense to the economists; then, even if they cannot find indisputable empirical evidence, using literal devices they still try to convince themselves and the audience. It is not the mathematical rigor that does the job but the art of persuasion. In this

regard, McCloskey argued that, the charm of scientific method is exaggerated. Rather, economists should advance the quality of their narratives for a more disciplined conversation.

Following McCloskey's rhetorical approach, Klamer (1987) analyzes the rationality metaphor in microeconomic theory. Similarly, Mirowski (1992) shows that neoclassical economics was built upon the constitutive metaphors of 19<sup>th</sup>-century physics. Bicchieri (1988), agreeing with McCloskey, discusses that metaphors are not merely ornamental. The common conclusion of these authors is that metaphors, as a rhetorical device, have some persuasive power above the scientific theories and findings. Klamer et al. (1988) gives a more far-reaching treatise on rhetoric of economics. Mäki (1988), on the other hand, claims that rhetoric and realism do not exclude each other and that together they could make up a coherent methodology of economics. McCloskey's early works on rhetoric reveals her disinterest in ideology. She does not totally ignore the ideological nature of economics; however, she definitely underplays its importance. The word "ideology" is mentioned only three times in her famous book *The Rhetoric of Economics*, and one of them is out of context; and, "ideological" is mentioned only once. In contrast, almost the entire literature of critical discourse analysis focuses primarily on the ideological aspects of certain dominant discourses. I should remark that Deirdre N. McCloskey (born Donald McCloskey) earned her undergraduate and graduate degrees in economics at Harvard University. Her dissertation supervisor was Alexander Gerschenkron, who was an Austrian School economist. Later, McCloskey taught and gained her tenure at the University of Chicago. Her neoclassical orientation possibly explains her hesitance towards an ideological critique of economics. She admits that neoclassical theory's predictions are not satisfactory, and that its assumptions are not realistic; yet, it is persuasive and should be accepted (1998). Her arguments are not for the rejection of neoclassical theory but for a refinement of its narrative.

It is not that different in the rest of the rhetoric of economics circle. Mäki (1995), diagnosing McCloskey's rhetoric, avoids touching on ideology; rather, he prefers a euphemistic expression such as "rhetorical justification of beliefs." In his article, he never uses the word "ideology" but the word "belief" is mentioned 38 times. Ariel Rubinstein, using a formal approach, has also made an attempt to show the relevance of language in economics (2000). Goldschmidt and Szmrecsanyi (2007), using corpus method, conducts a data-driven linguistic analysis of top economics journals and demonstrate that the language is highly technical and mathematical. Kalmi (2007) examines economics textbooks adopted for courses taught at the University of Helsinki between 1905 and 2005 to see how the treatment of cooperatives has changed over time. His longitudinal study shows that earlier textbooks have a greater and more positive coverage of cooperatives. On the other hand, modern day textbooks either not cover cooperatives or, worse, give misleading information about them. Hill (2000), as well, highlighting the importance of cooperatives as a democratic institution, shows that there is a visible neglect of worker co-ops in the economics textbooks. The disappearance of cooperatives from economics textbooks could be attributed to the fact that they are not an important part of economics as once they used to be; but the same is true for the perfectly competitive markets with atomistic firms. While pointing out certain

biases, none of these five papers, though, makes any discussion of the ideological underpinnings of economics discourse.

Heilbroner (1996), on the other hand, states that since we are social creatures with feelings it is not possible for economics to be without ideological content and that this is not a weakness but a necessity. He states that the word “capitalism” very rarely appears in *American Economic Review*, whereas the words “model” and “system” flourish. This aversion, according to Heilbroner, is an indicator of ideology. Heilbroner (1988, 2010) also asserts that the ideological content arises from the “absence of historical perspective” and “its denial of any trace of political power” (p. 109). In these respects, Heilbroner considers economics as ideology, rather than as a rhetoric. Gunnar Myrdal (1978), a Nobel Prize laureate in economics, rejects the positivist *idée fixe* saying “valuations are always with us” in economics (p. 778). However, there is a general reluctance, in mainstream economics, to explicitly refer to ideology. When they make noises about ideology, they do it to show how neoclassical economics is detached from it, because it is mathematical and positive.

The main motivation behind these ideological representations of aspects of the world, which contribute to establishing and maintaining relations of power, are domination and exploitation. They may be enacted in ways of interaction (and therefore in genres) and inculcated in ways of being identities (and therefore styles). In these senses, analysis of text is an important aspect of ideological critique.

Ideology, as a false-consciousness, reproduces social domination and power relations in a society and the main objective of critical discourse studies is to “make power relations explicit that are frequently obfuscated and hidden” (Wodak and Meyer, 2016, p. 19). Even though it is not the primary driver of social change, ideology, interacting with the material forces, affects and shapes our reality. People and policy makers reproduce the society being exposed to explicitly ideological discourses. This is why discursive dimensions of ideologies require special attention (van Dijk, 2000).

It is generally agreed by the historians that the main purpose of universal primary education is to control and manage the society by imposing a certain ideology (Clarke and Mearman, 2003). Hobsbawm discusses that the actual motivation behind universal education was not economic but political (2011). Bowles and Gintis (1976) provide a clearly more radical perspective stating that the role of education is to reproduce the status quo of society, with the current class structure and inherent inequalities. Howard Zinn, in his seminal work (2005), explains the U.S. education system as:

*The rich, giving part of their enormous earnings in this way, became known as philanthropists. These educational institutions did not encourage dissent; they trained the middlemen in the American system—the teachers, doctors, lawyers, administrators, engineers, technicians, politicians—those who would be paid to keep the system going, to be loyal buffers against trouble. (p. 263)*

Söderbaum (2008) argues that scientism enables economist to speak like experts; however, this expert position is dangerous if one acknowledges economics as ideology. Because textbooks are not read as ideological propaganda but as scientific gospels. If the standardized textbooks necessarily highlight one perspective and underplay or even ignore others, then it could be argued that economics teaching, indeed, is propaganda of a certain ideology. Galbraith supports this view:

*It is the nature of privileged position that it develops its own political justification and often the economic and social doctrine that serves it best. No one likes to believe that his or her personal well-being is in conflict with the greater public need. To invent a plausible or, if necessary, a moderately implausible ideology in defense of self-interest is thus a natural course. (1997, p. 5)*

Bailey discusses that education is an instrumental enterprise and implies that mainstream economics is all about indoctrination (1992). Chomsky (1975) also advocates that education empowers individuals to resist indoctrination. Cameron et al. (2003) in their article titled “Management Textbooks as Propaganda” interviewed four authors of leading management textbooks and asked if they intentionally wrote to advance the interests of certain groups and social classes, or if they objectively present the scientific theories and empirical works, as they are. Although there are slight differences among the four authors’ overall responses, all authors literally admit that their textbooks support managerial ideology only. Stephen Robbins, author and coauthor of bestselling management and organizational behavior textbooks, says that his textbooks “genuflect to the Gods of productivity, efficiency, goals etc.” R. Duane Ireland’s objective is to improve managerial practice. It is, indeed, quite fascinating to see how sincere business academics can be. Not many economic academics would admit that their research contains ideological elements.

Tracking the ideological underpinnings in social sciences is not a trivial task because the bias is usually not directly observable. Ideologies are complex and not easily reducible to simple mathematical equations (Söderbaum, 2008). Ideology does not take the form of deliberate misrepresentation of the truth (Heilbroner, 2010; Schumpeter, 1994), which would have been easier to detect if that was the case. Rather, ideology highlights some aspects of social reality while underplaying others. This opaque nature of ideology is what makes the rhetoric stronger and more relevant, indeed. Wodak and Meyer (2016) exemplify this saying, “a missing by-phrase in English passive constructions might be seen as an ideological means for concealing or “mystifying” reference to an agent” (p. 7). Anyon, overlapping with Heilbroner’s view, also notes that ideological bias in written texts “can take the form of omitting a fact or of subtle distinctions and emphases” (1979, p. 363). In that sense, even language itself can be ideological, since all aspects of social domination are manifested in language (Habermas, 1978). Eventually, a certain ideology might become so dominant and unchallenged that it would appear purely neutral to public.

Social science researches generate, for the most part, highly controversial results. This is particularly true for economics. Survey results of Alston et al. (1992) show that there are wide disagreements



even among economists in top-ranked universities, on the main propositions of economics, such as “minimum wage increases unemployment.” However, Gregory Mankiw, in his blog, affirms that “many students in introductory economics courses become more conservative—or, to be more precise, more classically liberal—than they began” (2006). It is quite difficult to distinguish whether the textbooks sincerely reflect on the neutral scientific knowledge and empirical facts, which unintentionally turn out to be yielding conservative policies; or if textbooks are merely apparatus of indoctrination pursuing hidden ideological agendas, or both.

Romanish (1983) shows that high school economics textbooks dominantly present free market and free enterprise notions while excluding other theories. He summarizes this bias with a comparative example; citizens of capitalist Western countries consider socialist countries as wasteful and inefficient with all the planning and government bureaucracy, whereas socialists view free market economies as inefficient and wasting resources on race-to-the-bottom advertising, product differentiation, bankruptcies, and recessions. Popkewitz (1977) also argued that objective and positive knowledge conveyed via standard social science textbooks usually has an ideological angle. Webster (1978, p. 85) examining five economics textbooks, suggested, “simplification of economic theory in elementary textbooks may encourage ideological distortions.” Cherry (1985) demonstrated that the minimum-wage legislation under Reagan was presented with a racial bias in the textbooks he studied. The main conclusion was that individuals have low income because they have low productivity, which can be taken as ideological. Feiner (1993) argues that there is a bias in the textbook presentation of issues related to women and minorities. Fullbrook (2009), calling for a pluralist education, harshly criticizes Mankiw’s ten principles and his ignorance of real-world economics.

Most of the above studies focus more on the textbook-ideology nexus, with no or weak reference to the rhetorical aspects of economics. Klamer’s article “The Textbook Presentation of Economic Discourse” (2013) makes a more complete three-way connection of rhetoric-textbook-ideology. Klamer gave a critical, but a quick, reading of Samuelson’s 12 editions, focusing mostly on the introduction chapters and table of contents. Highlighting Samuelson’s textbook as the usual suspect for a rhetorical analysis, Klamer (2013) contended that Samuelson’s characterization of economics is often misleading. He argued that Samuelson asserts his scientific authority using a “this-is-what-you-need-to-know-tone” in his textbook (Klamer, 2013). Klamer, just like McCloskey, accused Samuelson of imposing his authority without legitimate support, methodology, and evidence. The textbook knowledge of Samuelson is almost like a *deus ex machina*. Student do not learn how economists do economics, they just learn the conclusions and stories legitimizing them. Klamer said that “the ideological components are not made explicit; they have to be teased out in dialogue” (p. 124). This diagnosis calls for a more detailed discourse analysis. Another study on Samuelson’s textbook is Marc Linder’s two-volume book *Anti-Samuelson* (1977). Linder, unlike Klamer’s longitudinal approach, took one single edition (the 9<sup>th</sup>) and gives a chapter-by-chapter reading of the textbook. He argued that what Samuelson presents is simply bourgeois economics. Although Linder’s attack was a serious one, Samuelson

has remained silent on this issue. Klammer concluded that Samuelson's silence, to a degree, justifies the accusations against his textbook (2013).

#### **4. Concluding remarks**

There is a growing need for pluralist education in economics and textbooks play an important role in this. Economics textbooks have become extremely commodified. The objective of publishers and authors is not necessarily the enlightenment of the people but maximization of profit and increasing their market shares. As George (1990) points out, "textbooks have shifted from being works of scholarship to being products for the market" (pp. 875-876). This creates alienation of the students and professors in the classroom. Many professors teach economics without believing in what they are teaching. Many students study their classes questioning its relevance for their lives and for the people. Although the students doubt about the relevance of the knowledge presented in the economics textbooks, they do not care much because, at the end of the day, all the companies look for is a prestigious degree from a mainstream college.

The literature on economics textbooks is very narrow. This could, partly, be due to lack of relevant data and, definitely, due to ignorance. Clearly, the mainstream literature plays the blind when it comes to economic rhetoric and ideology. The critical literature, on the other hand, acknowledges the rhetorical and ideological aspects of neoclassical economics; however, it has not made satisfactory progress on the linkage between rhetoric and ideology. One group of articles focus only on the rhetorical aspects of economics textbook, another group highlights the ideological nature; yet, the rhetoric-ideology nexus remains understudied. One obvious reason is that there are not well-defined measures for ideology and rhetoric, which makes the arguments relatively inconclusive. Another is that most economists are not well-educated in topics like philosophy, methodology, linguistics, and even politics; so that, even if some of them want to, they are not equipped with the tools to understand and criticize the science they are producing. Hence, most of the philosophical critiques comes outside of the economics profession, which are completely disregarded by the mainstream. A third reason is that staying in the rhetoric circle is safer for academics who, for certain reasons, plan to benefit from being closer to the mainstream. Journals ranked according to impact factors create a self-censorship within academia. It is almost impossible to publish critical research in top journals. Bringing out the ideological underpinnings of neoclassical economics, arguing against journal's main research programs, building macro models without micro-foundations, assuming non-optimizing agent behavior etc. are all rationales for rejections. As a result, if you want to get an easy tenure with a good pay, you should not criticize the established literature. In terms of the textbooks, this leads to a standardization of both the content and the presentation. Colander (2005) argues that the textbooks are totally out-of-date. All the textbooks, more or less, are selling the same content with similar presentations for decades. In such an uncompromising circle, it is hard to sell a differentiated product, anyway. Since no author wants to kill the goose that lays golden eggs, spin-offs of Samuelson's gold standard textbook continue to dominate the market.

The reviewed studies show the apparent discontent about economics textbooks, at least within the nonmainstream. To make a case for inherent ideological bias in the textbooks, critical discourse analysis methods would be useful (Wodak and Meyer, 2016). Although Klamer (2013) gives a critical reading of the first 12 editions of Samuelson's textbook, a more comprehensive study seems to be necessary to see how ideological bias has evolved over time, especially over the last three decades. A cross-sectional analysis of the best-selling textbooks —of authors like Greg Mankiw, Paul Krugman, Olivier Blanchard and such—would also contribute to the discussion. Alternatively, the rhetoric on specific policies, such as privatization or unionization, could be inspected. These would help bring rhetoric-ideology nexus to the forefront.

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