

## EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

Luigi Einaudi argued long ago that economic historians must use the tools provided by up-to-date economics (Einaudi 1936: 158); his teaching and example were forgotten, but revived a generation later with what has come to be known as the cliometric revolution. Economic history by economists – the “new economic history”, “cliometric history”, “econometric history” – has since prospered: in 1993 the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences was awarded to two pioneer cliometricians, Robert Fogel and Douglass North.

Cliometrics' track record now spans more than half a century: it invites the taking of stock, an assessment of the discipline's theoretical and practical impact. The present Symposium is our contribution to that assessment.

It opens with Stefano Fenoaltea's “Spleen: The failures of the cliometric school”. This paper argues that cliometricians have failed as economists, as historians, and as economic historians, not least because measurement is not taken seriously: provocative theses, that prompted us to invite leading economists and economic historians to express their own evaluation, and to gather the essays we received. Leandro Prados de la Escosura, Alberto Baffigi and Giovanni Vecchi share many of Fenoaltea's criticisms, but are in general more sanguine than splenetic. Claude Diebolt and Michael Hauptert altogether reject those criticisms: they argue that cliometrics has made, and continues to make, valuable contributions not only to economic history but to economics in general, notably through the creation of datasets. Jacob Assa broadens the debate, deconstructing “GDP” as political rhetoric.

We trust this collection of papers will generate further reflection on the evolution and contribution of the cliometric approach.

## REFERENCES

- EINAUDI L. 1936, “Lo strumento economico nella interpretazione della storia”, *Rivista di Storia Economica*, 1: 149-158.