

分工、报酬递增和企业制度

—— 一个理论框架及对国有企业的分析

段文斌 著

DIVISION OF LABOUR, INCREASING
RETURNS AND INSTITUTION OF FIRM

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献给母校南开大学和我的老师们

序 言

段文斌博士的专著《分工、报酬递增和企业制度》，是在其博士论文的基础上经过潜心修改完成的。这本书由天津人民出版社付梓出版，是学术界的又一优秀研究成果问世。我作为作者的导师，谨以此序言表示祝贺，并向读者推荐。

企业理论是现代经济学研究的前沿领域，选择这一领域进行新的探索具有重要的理论价值和实践意义。这本专著是在该领域研究中理论上创新，实践上可操作，方法上具有逻辑说服力的上乘之作。

该书的理论创新是，在评述前人已有论述的基础上，对企业理论的两个主要方面——企业的本质和企业的内部结构进行了新的说明。作者认为，企业是社会分工发展的结果，企业本身也是分工的组织，社会分工的发

展取决于社会分工的收益超过交易费用的支出,企业内分工的发展取决于企业内分工的收益超过组织费用的支出,因而报酬递增是关键条件,企业的产生与发展是分工演进和报酬递增的结果。根据这一论断的逻辑发展,企业中的委托—代理和治理结构,要求以最小化的组织费用,获取分工的报酬递增收益。这些论证既吸收了前人贡献,又有新的推进,因而是对企业理论的新的突破和发展,并形成了一个系统和完整的企业理论框架。

该书的实践性在于,运用发展了的企业理论,分析我国国有企业改革中的所有权安排和治理结构。在深入剖析传统国有企业的产权特征和效率障碍的基础上,论证了所有制改革与产权改革是国有企业改革的关键问题,提出国有企业改革的产权安排和治理结构的设计方案。在产权安排上,提出以法人股为主的改革思路和混合所有制经济的生成模式;在治理结构上,提出企业家的生成机制以及国有资产管理体制与金融体制配套改革的具体措施。

该书采用的方法,主要是演绎推理和逻辑批判,这是深层理论研究的思维。作者运用这种方法保持了全文的逻辑一致性,从而具有较强的理论力度。特别值得倡导的是,作者认为,理论创新不是靠直觉、猜想和灵感之类

的非逻辑跳跃,而是要在前人已有理论的基础上作出合乎逻辑的说明与发展,它是知识增长与科学思维的结果,这种认识体现出作者从事理论研究的严谨科学态度。

段文斌博士在治学上恪守勤奋精神和严谨作风。据我所知,近几年在他的学习和工作日程中,是很少有节假日的。他的博士论文在同行评议和答辩中,曾得到有关专家学者的高度评价。但是,他并不急于出版,而是利用一年的时间进行修改。总之,这本专著的出版使我感到由衷的高兴。这不仅因为作者是我的学生,更重要的是这些青年经济学者使我们对经济学在中国的发展充满信心。

朱光华

一九九八年五月于南开大学

ABSTRACT

DIVISION OF LABOUR, INCREASING RETURNS AND INSTITUTION OF FIRM

The title "Division of Labour, Increasing Returns and Institution of Firm" may seem puzzling. However, it is not my real intention. In this book, I try to construct a general theory about the nature of the firm with the definition and analytical tool of division of labour and increasing returns based on neoclassical theory and the theory of the firm. The theory gives a logically identical illustration about the change of scale and the evolution of organization of the firm. On the basis of this theory, I try to theoretically interpret such practical problems as reform of state-owned enter-

prises and predict its trend, as well as the implication of policies in the theoretical analysis of the book.

According to classical economics represented by Adam Smith, market competition can maximize the social welfare during the process of resource allocation, and division of labour can increase the efficiency of production, both of which make the indispensable aspects of economics. In neoclassical formulas for the function of market competition, the theory of production function and consumption function make the effect of division incompatible with the market competition. In details, neoclassical economics deduces the supply function from the production function and the assumption of maximizing the profits; it deduces the demand function from the consumption function and the assumption of maximizing the utility; and it deduces from the equality of demand and supply the equilibrium of market which can coordinate individual interest. Among these logical argumentation, the non-scale-return production function only reflects the relationship between input and output, but

it does not show how the level of specialization as well as the structure of organization affect the efficiency of production. Smith's theory of division depends on the axiom that division of labour can improve the efficiency of production and it is concerned with the economies of scale. Thus, the theoretical frame of neoclassical economics successfully expounds the first aspect of classical economics, but conflicts with the second one. *"Neoclassical economics describes the technical condition of the firm by means of production function, while the central part of production theory which Smith, Marx and Young hold is about the relationship between the efficiency of production (level of technology) and economic organization in society. So far as production theory, neoclassical economics abandons the essence of the classical economic theory."* (Yang Xiaokai, 1989)

Neoclassical micro-economics focuses its attention on market transaction, and its subject matter is the function of price in achieving the equilibrium between demand and supply. Under the tradition of neoclassicism, the firm is simplified as the assump-

tion of achieving maximization of profits and is formulated by production function as the input-output relation under the premise of the given resources and the level of technology. Some things are not regarded as the object of study, such as why the firm exists, how the scale of the firm is determined and what are the structures of organization within the firm, and so on. The general equilibrium theory, which serves as the destination of neoclassical micro-economics, was established under rigorous assumptions as its premise, such as non-existence economy of scale, complete market, full information and non-existence of externality. If those requirements are fulfilled, the market will automatically reach the optimal equilibrium without concerning the firm. Therefore, neoclassical economics pays no attention to studying the problem of the firm, and naturally there is no theory of the firm in it at all.

The analytical tool of neoclassical economics is another reason why it ignores the research of the firm. In 1930s when Marshall set up the theoretical frame of neoclas-

sical micro-economics, nobody knew how to deal with the policy-making problems of existing corner solution, and the method was found in 1950s. Economists have to evade corner solution in order to apply the marginal analysis which is based on inner-point method. A central point which classical economics studies—the relationship between division of labour and efficiency of production, can only be formalized by introducing corner solution. Hence, neoclassical method shifts the kernel of economic research from division of labour, specialization and the problem of economic organization to resource allocation within the given structure of organization. Why the division of labour takes place? Why is the economic organization getting more and more specialized? Why the firm comes into existence? Why is the organization of the firm getting more and more complicated? All of these questions are the puzzles which neoclassical economics can not work out.

Being an important theory branch of modern micro-economics, the theory of the firm originated in 1930s. Its research object

mainly includes two related aspects—the nature and inner structure of the firm. The former indicates the origin and scale of the firm, which was set up by Coase; the latter indicates the principal-agent relationship and incentives, which was developed by Berle and Means. Since then, the theory of the firm had not advanced further until 1970s. Then its value was gradually acknowledged by many scholars, who followed the two clues to study the theory of the firm from different point of view.

After 1970s, its rapid development made the theory of the firm the vanguard field in modern economics. The theory of the firm, however, has not formed a complete theoretical system up to now. Almost all the academic schools and theoretical branches study the firm only from their own aspects, while keep up a logical congruity and compatibility is overlooked. For this reason, all of them lack a complete interpretation of the firm. In general, the theory of transaction cost, which discloses the nature of the firm, and the theory of principal-agent, which discloses the internal structure

of the firm, are separated from each other. That is to say, although the application of the definition and analytical tool of transaction cost can explain the relation between firm and market to a certain extent, it can not show the principal-agent relationship, incentive and co-ordination within the firm. It is clear that not only every school of the theory of the firm has its own one-sided version, but the theory of the firm itself does need a systematic and logical framework.

The purpose of the book is to rectify the deviation of cognition in neoclassical theory as well as to build up a systematic and logical framework of the firm theory. I have to admit that it is hard to find a satisfactory one within the current frameworks of the theory of the firm. Having re-examined classical economics, I find among them so many deep thoughts which supply us with guiding direction of research. The firm is connected with division of labour in society, and itself is also the organization of internal division. Thus, division of labour (including division of labour in society and in

firm) is the key point to explain the nature and internal structure of the firm. The reason why neoclassical economics abandoned division of labour within its theoretical framework of market competition lies in the trouble of adopting division of labour into its theoretical system. It is important to give a convincing explanation about increasing returns. Using the concepts and analytical tools of division and increasing returns, I propose a general theory about the nature of the firm; and with the same logic, I show the evolution from traditional firm to modern one. Generally speaking, since the origin, the scale change and the organization evolution of the firm can be explained within the same logical framework which takes division of labour and increasing returns as its central point, this book may be valuable to contribute to the development of theory.

The reform of firms as the decisive step of the economic system innovation in China, though having achieved some accomplishment, is hard to go ahead at present. One of the crux is the limitation of the theory of the firm guiding the reform practice effec-

tively. In our academic circles of economics, studies of the theory of the firm and the reform of state-owned firms are developed essentially at two levels, one is the summaries of the relative documents overseas, the other is positive research on the problems, reasons and measures of the state-owned firms. Lacking a set of theories based on the theory of the firm for analyzing the nature and operation characteristics of the state-owned firms, it is not easy to understand exactly and thoroughly the current problems and the reasons about the state-owned enterprises. And the problems can not be solved completely. On the basis of the comparison and synthesis of theories of the firm, or the developed theory of the firm, the book tries to meet the practical need for building up a modern institution of firm and to study the problem of the reform of state-owned firms. So the book has some practical significance as well.

There are eight chapters included in this book.

It begins with an introduction in **Chapter 1**. First, I make briefly a comment on

neoclassical theory and the theory of the firm, then I evaluate the theoretical value and practical significance of the book. After discussing the methodology of economics, I spontaneously give my methods of research. In my opinions, what must be pointed out is that theoretical innovation originates from logical criticism during the period of deductive reasoning, and what applied to the study of the firm theory is the methods of deductive reasoning and logical criticism. At the end of Chapter 1, I give an introduction of the structure and primary contents of the book.

In Part I which consists of Chapter 2, 3 and 4, the nature of the firm and its evolution are discussed. They are the important parts of the firm theory.

In **Chapter 2**, I summarize the theories of the firm. The criticism about neoclassical theory of the firm develops at two levels—the theory of general equilibrium and neoclassical method. It is vital to reunderstand neoclassical micro-economics from the angle of the theory of the firm. The discussion about Coase's theory of the firm (the

theory of transaction cost) is after the definition of transaction and transaction cost. From my points of view, it is not complete and scientific to explain the origin and scale change of the firm using the theory of transaction cost. However, it provides a new method of thinking. The substantive development of the theory of transaction cost is of many aspects, among which chiefly discuss the theory of indirect pricing and the theory of asset specificity because they best represent and direct the theory of transaction cost. We agree to such idea that Coase's theory can be divided into two branches— one is developed by Steven Cheung, the other is by Williamson, Yang-Ng Model and Grossman-Hart-Moore Model are the ownership theory of these two branches respectively. (Zhang Weiyang, 1995)

I put forward a general theory about the nature of the firm in **Chapter 3**. First, I propose a basic explanation about the origin of the firm on the basis of Smith's theory of exchange and division of labour, and Marx's analyzing of division of labour and handi-