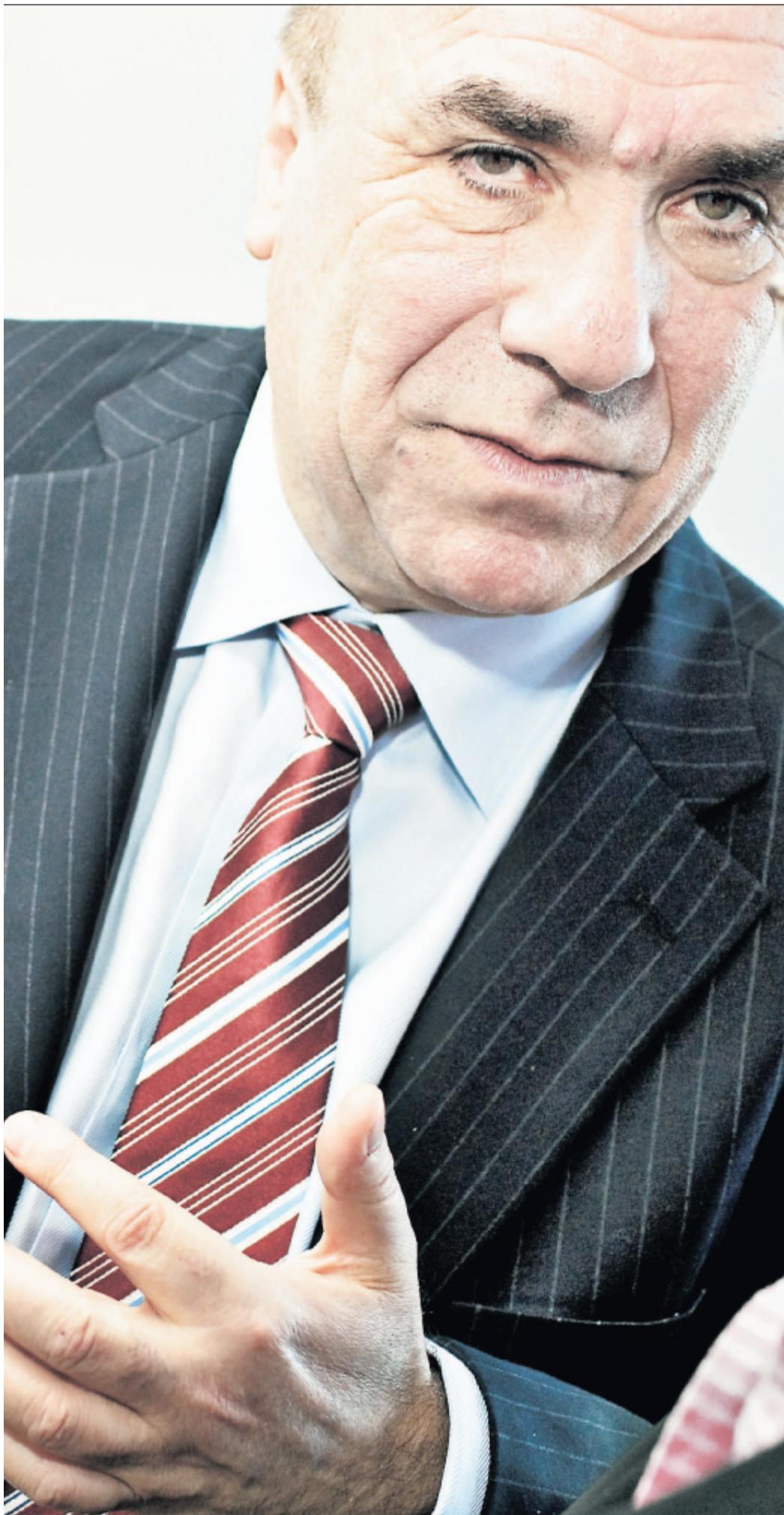


Simmering confrontation with economic dogmas

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»Der eksisterer ikke noget dilemma mellem ustabilitet og vækst. Kortsigtet ustabilitet er nødvendig for at skabe vækst.«

Roman Frydman, professor, New York University

Ulmende opgør med økonomiske dogmer

■ Interview

AFTHOMAS BERNT HENRIKSEN OG JACOK KLOK

Også om 25 år vil verdens økonomer formentlig stadig tale om det citat, som bedst synes at indfange betydningen af finanskrisen.

»Those of us who have looked to the self interest of lending institutions to protect shareholder's equity – myself especially – are in a state of shocked disbelief,« sagde Alan Greenspan, direktøren for Federal Reserve 1987-2006, i en kongreshøring den 23. oktober 2008.

Citatet er langt mere end en bodgang for den økonom, som svindede taktstokken i den globale økonomi i næsten 20 år.

Citatet er også startpunktet for den første større debat om de doktriner, som har domineret økonomisk-politisk tænkning i over 30 år, nemlig troen på, at forbrugere og virksomheder er grundlæggende fornuftige – rationelle – og at der derfor ikke er brug for nogen stat til at styre den økonomiske udvikling.

»De eksisterende makroøkonomiske og finansielle modeller portrætterer mennesker som robotter og markeder som maskiner,« siger professor Roman Frydman fra New York University.

Ny bog roses til skyerne

Om kort tid udsender han bogen »Beyond Mechanical Markets« (Princeton, University Press, 2011), som han har skrevet sammen med økonomen Michael D. Goldberg, professor ved University of New Hampshire.

Allerede inden udgivelsen roses bogen til skyerne af nobelpristagere i økonomi og andre moderne økonomiske tænkere.

Professor Frydman talte i torsdags på et mini-seminar arrangeret af dagbladet Børsen for en kreds af danske topøkonomer.

»Selvom den sovjetiske økonomis kollaps klart har vist, at central økonomisk styring har katastrofale følger, så har andre taget konsekvenserne heraf og er gået i modsat retning, nemlig at staten ikke har nogen som helst rolle at spille i de finansielle markeder. Det synspunkt har især væ-

født og opvokset i det kommunistiske Polen, indtil han som 18-årig flyttede til USA.

Han forklarer selv sin skepsis over for den eksisterende økonomiske teori med en henvisning til sin bog:

Forfatteren og kommunisten Bertolt Brecht spørger således i 1953 efter en arbejderopstand i Østtyskland i et berømt citat, om »det ikke ville være lettere at oplose folket og vælge et andet i stedet.«

De økonomiske teorier kan ikke hvile på en antagelse om, at forbrugerne og virksomhederne i økonomien er på afveje, hvis de ikke følger de økonomiske modeller. Det må være omvendt, konstaterer Frydman.

Roman Frydman stiller selv spørgsmålet, om moderne økonomisk teori er klar til at tage opgøret med nogle stivnede dogmer i de økonomiske skoler.

Erkendelsen af grundlæggende mangel på viden om det økonomiske system og effekten af økonomisk-politiske indgreb har nemlig vidtrækkende konsekvenser for den måde, som der føres økonomiske politik på og foretages regulering af den finansielle sektor.

Håb om fornyelse

»Vi antager i dag, at vi er guider og skaber illusionen om, at vi har en kontrol, som vi ikke har,« siger Roman Frydman og ser et vist håb for, at den økonomiske teori vil forny sig efter krisen.

Han peger på, at de borgerlige økonomers insisteren på rationelle forventninger blandt forbrugere og virksomheder var det helt centrale argument for at rulle statens rolle i det økonomiske system tilbage over de seneste 30 år.

Professor Frydman mener, at bogen leverer et svar på det hul i den økonomiske tænkning, som krisen efterlader – et svar som forner en grundlæggende tro på markedet med forkastelsen af den miskrediterede tillid til, at økonomerne ved noget sikkert om, hvordan mennesker faktisk tår sig, uanset om de er forbrugere, topchefer eller de bankfolk, som Greenspan havde tillid til.

Liberale økonomer vil nok kritisere Frydman for at nære overdreven tillid til statens evne til at skabe politiker eller institutioner, som kan styre det økonomiske og finansielle system, men i en dansk økonomisk debat ligger Frydman klart mere til højre end til venstre.

Frydman er imidlertid grundlæggende liberal og er

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BY THOMAS Bernt HENRIKSEN AND JACOK Klok

Interview

Also in 25 years, world economists probably will still talk about the quote that best seems to capture the impact of financial crisis.

"Those of us Who have looked til self interest of lending institution, two protect shareholder's equity - myself specielt – are in a state of Shocked disbelief," said Alan Greenspan, Governor of the Federal Reserve 1987-2006, in a congressional hearing on 23 October 2008.

This quote is far more than a admittance of guilt from the economist who swung baton in the global economy for nearly 20 years.

This quote is also the starting point of the first major debate on the doctrines that have dominated economic and political thought for over 30 years, namely the belief that consumers and businesses are grundlæggede reasonable - rational - and therefore no need for any state to steer economic development.

"The current macroeconomic and financial models portray people as robots and markets such as machinery," says Professor Roman Frydman of New York University.

New book acclaim

Soon he is releasing the book 'Beyond Mechanical Markets' (Princeton University Press, 2011), which he has co-written with economist Michael D. Goldberg, a professor at the University of New Hampshire.

Even before the release praised the book to the skies of Nobel Prize winners in economics and other modern economic thinkers.

Professor Frydman spoke last Thursday at a mini-seminar organized by the newspaper Børsen for a group of Danish topøkonomer.

"Although the Soviet economy's collapse has clearly shown that central economic management have catastrophic consequences, as have others take the consequences and gone in the opposite direction, namely that the state does not have any role to play in the financial markets. That view has mainly been defended by supporters of laissez-faire, exemplified in the 1980s by President Reagan and Prime Minister Thatcher, "believes Roman Frydman.

The financial crisis has given new momentum to the economic school that dominated the economic debate before especially the American economist and Nobel laureate Milton Friedman (1912-1906) in the 1980s was swept Keynesians (named after John Maynard Keynes (1883-1946) of the runway after the 1970 global economic crisis.

With the financial crisis, the belief that fiscal policy can stabilize the economic system, given the Renaissance, but also the belief that consumers and businesses are largely driven by psychology and moods, brutish instincts when making decisions to invest or consume, rather than being driven by common sense.

An alternative approach

"Our criticism of the existing economic theory has led us to develop an alternative approach to model financial markets. We call it "Imperfect Knowledge Economics (IKE)," says Roman Frydman.

"We believe that markets are a fundamental necessity in the economic system. But we need to get them to work better, and we

need to come to the realization that fluctuations in the financial markets is something perfectly normal. There is no dilemma between instability and growth. Short-term instability is necessary for growth. "

The American professor myself believe that the new contribution to economic thinking is midway between the dominant monetarist-inspired economic school and the Keynesians on the other side.

Liberal economists will probably criticize Frydman to nourish excessive trust in the state's ability to create policies or institutions that can manage the economy and financial system, but in a Danish economic debate is Frydman definitely more right than text on the left.

Frydman is fundamental liberal and was born and raised in communist Poland until he was 18-year-old moved to the U.S..

He himself explains his skepticism about the existing economic theory with a reference to his book:

The author and communist Bertolt Brecht asks so in 1953 after a worker uprising in East Germany in a famous quote about 'it would be easier to dissolve the people and choose another instead. "

The economic theories can not rest on an assumption that consumers and businesses in the economy have gone astray if they do not follow the economic models. It must be reversed, says Frydman.

Roman Frydman make himself the question whether modern economic theory is ready to revolt against some stiff dogma of economic schools.

The realization of fundamental lack of knowledge about the economic system and the effect of economic-policy measures have

namely profound implications for the way that brought economic policies and made adjustments to the financial sector.

Hope for Renewal

'We assume today that we are gods and creates the illusion that we have a control that we do not have, "says Roman Frydman and sees some hope that economic theory would renew itself after the crisis.

He suggests that the bourgeois economists' insistence on rational expectations among consumers and businesses was the key argument to roll the state's role in the economic system back over the past 30 years.

Professor Frydman believes that the book provides an answer to the gap in economic thinking, as the crisis leaves - a response which combines a fundamental belief in the market with the rejection of the discredited confidence that economists know nothing certain about how people actually live itself whether they are consumers, top executives or bankers, as Greenspan was confident.

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