

CONCLUSION

THE purpose of this book has been to provide a box of tools for the analytical economist. The area within which these tools can work is very narrowly bounded. A number of unsolved problems lie behind and before the problems with which they are adapted to deal. Behind lie the fundamental problems on whose solution depends the validity of the whole supply-and-demand-curve analysis. To these general questions the tools, in the nature of the case, can have no contribution to make. But even within their own sphere the tools can do no work unless they are given some materials to work on. The imaginary examples of the shapes and movements of demand curves and costs curves, constructed in order to display the apparatus, serve to show the kind of results that the tools could produce if they were given some realistic matter on which to exercise their ingenuity. Ahead lie a number of problems for which fresh tools may be required, but which are soluble at the same level of abstraction as the problems here discussed. Beyond them again lie the problems which require some more complicated technique, such as could survive at a lower level of abstraction.

The level of abstraction maintained in this book is distressingly high. The technique can only survive in an atmosphere rarefied by the adoption of very severe simplifying assumptions. The reader who is interested in results immediately applicable to the real world has every right to complain that these tools are of little use to him. The knives are of bone and the hammers of wood, only capable of cutting paper and driving pins into cardboard. But the analytical economist who is prepared to work stage by stage towards the still far-distant ideal of constructing an analysis which will be capable of solving the problems presented by the real world may perhaps find in this tool-box some implements which will serve his turn.