



Toward a Public and Professional Identity for Our Economics

DANIEL B. KLEIN¹

ABSTRACT

THE DEMAND AND SUPPLY OF IDENTITY WORKS RATHER DIFFERENTLY THAN THE demand and supply of dinner. You can enjoy Greek food tonight and Thai tomorrow. You can enjoy a meal in isolation. Identity is different. Because choice is socially embedded, identity suffuses most any meaningful preference scheme or utility function. If you are shopping for identity, what is it in you that constitutes the basis for the choice?

Many of our failure theories apply to the demand and supply of identity. Heck, not only do societies and institutions suffer identity lock-in, individuals do. There's no reason to reject the suggestion that there are opportunities for better identity options. In one's formative years one might come to a menu option, a meal that lasts a lifetime, that doesn't really agree with him.

And there's always scope for reconfiguring the menu. An identity works in relation to a scheme of options. For many, "Republican" means not Democrat.

But as Yogi Berra said, "If you don't know where you're going, you might end up somewhere else." Where you're going sometimes turns out to be a destination in a configuration other than you figured.

Here I endeavor some identity entrepreneurship. I sense a latent demand for a new identity option for economists. I would associate the new identity with, among others, Adam Smith, Edwin Cannan, Friedrich Hayek, Milton Friedman, Ronald Coase, and James Buchanan—the "SCHFCB" identity. Well, that is but one name that won't do.

¹ Professor of Economics, George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia 22030

This article and the associated questionnaire grew particularly from discussions I had with Russell Roberts, as well as the Econlib article that he helped me with ([link](#)). Parts of this article replay passages of that article. For valuable comments I thank Niclas Berggren, Jason Briggeman, Kirk Dameron, Dan Johansson, Nils Karlson, and Pedro Romero.

I tentatively call it “Smithian.” Perhaps ten percent of economists in the United States share a broadly Smithian character. Should we identify and declare it? Should we try to cultivate an identity that functions in both the professional and the public cultures?

Oh, let’s give it a try. Even if the probability of success is small, the potential upside is great indeed—imagine, a classical-liberal economist identity that functions in the public culture!—and the costs of our trying are low.

Here, the entrepreneurship is cultural, and hence collaborative in an open-ended way. We need to make sure that we are, or could be, a community—of a networked sort. We need to discover what the latent community thinks, or would think if it were a community. How would you characterize “we”? Who all is “we”? What kind of economics does this “we” represent?

If we build it, maybe others will come. But what exactly is “it”? And, what would it mean for others to “come”? What activities would actualize the identity and associated community?

A process of co-determination and mutual adjustment might be advanced by open discussion. This article consists of an essay followed by a questionnaire to form the basis of further discussion. I will invite a set of individuals to complete the questionnaire. All completed questionnaires will be non-anonymous and made available online.

The questionnaire is not a survey. Rather, it is more like a set of interviews, to elicit interest and discover what each identified individual thinks. The following individuals will be invited to complete the questionnaire:

- Individuals who are members of the Institute of Economic Affairs’ academic advisory council or honorary fellows
- Individuals who have served as president of the Mont Pelerin Society
- Individuals who have served as president or vice-president of the Association for Private Enterprise Education (APEE)
- Individuals who have served as president or vice-president of the Society for the Development of Austrian Economics (SDAE)
- Individuals who have served as president or vice-president of the Public Choice Society
- Individuals who served as president of the European Public Choice Society
- Individuals tenured in the George Mason University Department of Economics
- Individuals who are research or associate fellows or members of the scientific advisory board of the Ratio Institute (Stockholm)
- Individuals listed on the *Econ Journal Watch* masthead (including editors, directors, and Advisory Council members)
- Individuals who have received the Nobel prize in economics
- Individuals who have received the John Bates Clark Medal from the American Economics Association

- Individuals who have served as president of the American Economics Association, Royal Economics Society, European Economics Association, Canadian Economics Association, Southern Economics Association, Western Economic Association, or Eastern Economics Association

CHARACTER AND ITS HETEROGENEITY WITHIN ECONOMICS

Adam Smith taught that people need to define and judge themselves as beings that transcend the bestial. An economist has purposes qua economist, purposes related to serving goals, causes, values, and ideas. According to Aristotle, “Character is that which reveals moral purpose, exposing the class of things a man chooses or avoids.”²

Although economists share some basic ideas and formulations, they often differ somewhat in terms of the important things that Aristotle associated with character. Economists differ in basic purposes, in some of their basic formulations, in modes of discourse, in presumptions about what is good for society, in kinds of audiences or discourse to seek or avoid, and in associated policy judgments. Character types can themselves be subjected to evaluation. In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Adam Smith wrote: “The characters of men ... may be fitted either to promote or to disturb the happiness both of the individual and of the society.”

If asked, most economists would probably say they serve society by serving science. To serve science, they follow the customs, standards, and practices of academic economics. Doing “normal science” is keeping your nose to the professional grindstone, in the faith that doing well academically is doing good. Perhaps the dominant characteristic of the normal economist is a tendency to look to the profession—its top journals, its most cited individuals—to determine what kinds of activities and purposes are meritorious. The “normal” character in economics feels considerable deference, if not loyalty, to the top of the economics pyramid.

The practical morals of “normal” practices become adopted and internalized without much critical scrutiny. Thinking of their purpose as merely “scientific,” uncritical economists are in fact assuming and adopting the particular substantive judgments implicit in normal practices. Perhaps most economists see themselves as character-free. But once normal economics is subjected to critical scrutiny, we find norms.

For example, we often see deference to top economics, and among top economists we often see a focus on the policy and institutional status-quo. Specifically, top economists tend to carry a presumption of the status quo, such that challenges to the status quo bear the burden of proof. If you think far outside the status quo, or make explicit ideas like the distinction between voluntary and

² Here I omit citations and references. Write to me (dklein@gmu.edu) for any you may desire.

coercive action, normal science might dismiss you as an “ideologue,” “advocate,” or purveyor of “normative” economics.

Another example of tacit norms in normal economics is a certain double-standard. Sometimes it seems that free enterprise is deemed to fail if it works less than perfectly, and government activism is deemed to succeed if it works at all.

Yet another example is that by flattening human beings down to machines and flattening knowledge down to information, some of the moral, behavioral, and epistemic facets of the problem, facets that might be important, are eclipsed or misrepresented.

Still other examples could be offered, but the point is that there is no “character-free” economist. The notion of being without character is nonsensical. The discipline is populated by economists of different character types.

THE SMITHIAN ECONOMIST: A FEW CHARACTERISTICS

One of the broad and venerable characters is that of Adam Smith, Edwin Cannan, Friedrich Hayek, Milton Friedman, Ronald Coase and James Buchanan, among others. Surely, there are some tensions within this set, but more important commonalities predominate. Each of us would paint the portrait a bit differently, of course, and there’s no urge to converge on a single rendering.

And I have no great urge to propose a particular name. In previous discourse I suggested the cumbersome “spontaneous-order economics,” and then “Smith-Hayek economics.” It might be useful to proceed with a meaningless term that is an obvious placeholder—such as “Placeholder.” But, instead, here I proceed by calling the composite character “Smithian.” Using a meaningful candidate term advances the exploration of the advantages and disadvantages to consider. Also, Smith looms large in all this, so getting some focus on his significance seems worthwhile. But the suggestion of “Smithian” remains tentative, half placeholder.

Here I offer six characteristics to indicate the portrait in my mind:

1. a tendency to employ, and even make explicit, the distinction between voluntary and coercive action in formulating many basic economic issues, categories, principles, and arguments;
2. an appreciation that knowledge is not merely information, but also interpretation and judgment, and as such is highly particular to the individual and the moment; it is essential for humans to err, in the sense that they kick themselves for having interpreted or judged badly; asymmetry marks not merely information but interpretation; the “common knowledge” assumption typically does not hold;
3. a sense that economics must be relevant and serve social purposes, and that such service necessarily entails engagement with non-economists, notably laypeople and policy-makers; a sense that our academic institu-

tions might fail such that doing well academically does not always align to doing good;

4. a sensibility that economic reality is incredible—in the sense that attempts to depict or explain economic reality are generally not credible; this sensibility eschews efforts to paint a picture of the economy, to know the economy, beyond some by-and-large generalities;
5. a sober, non-romantic view of government—since economic reality is scarcely knowable, we should be wary of those who pretend to manipulate it beneficially; moreover, coercive arrangements generally self-correct much less effectively and reliably than do voluntary processes;
6. a presumption in favor of liberty, not the status quo; the burden of proof should be on those who favor restriction or intervention, even when it is the status quo.

These Smithian characteristics are not particularly salient in most economists today. Some of the Smithian characteristics even go against the grain of normal economics. We might advance the Smithian characteristics by building an effective “we.”

IDENTITY: CHARACTER IDENTIFIED, AFFIRMED, PROCLAIMED

Those of like mind or kindred spirit share our purposes. With them we have fraternal feeling. They are kin in character.

In pre-Civil War America, proponents of the immediate emancipation of all slaves identified themselves as “abolitionist.” Not all abolitionists agreed on every aspect of the struggle. But the overarching identity of “abolitionist” facilitated discovery, mobilization, and cooperation. And indeed it cut both ways, as their opponents, too, called them abolitionists, and sometimes used violence against them. “Abolitionist” was an identity, as in what one shows when asked for “ID.” Someone’s name is a label, but it is also an identity functioning in society.

Not all of those who identified with abolitionism presented themselves as “all on fire” like William Lloyd Garrison. We do not always wear on our sleeve all important elements of our identity—such as our religious convictions. In economics, one might identify to one extent or another with Marxism, Keynesianism, Austrianism, or feminism, but remain low-key about it. The present endeavor is not about bringing people “out of the closet.” Rather, the idea is to coordinate on a new classical-liberal identity, even if, for some, it functions primarily in closets.

Even if the group only meets in the closet, even if others do not know *who* exactly belongs to the network and spirit, the wider culture nonetheless identifies the name of the group and associates it with the group’s characteristics. But this will be the case only if there are *some* who proclaim the identity, *some* William Lloyd Garrisons. Thus, the rest of the abolitionists may identify with Garrison and abo-

litionism, even if they remain low-key about it.

The *American Heritage Dictionary's* first two definitions of *identity* are:

- “The collective aspect of the set of characteristics by which a thing is definitively recognizable or known”
- “The set of behavioral or personal characteristics by which an individual is recognizable as a member of a group.”

Identity reduces the transaction costs of finding and cooperating with kin, yielding fruits in identification, recruitment, mobilization, and organization. It forms a basis for teamwork and shared sentiment. It develops purposes, clarifies messages, and emboldens the spirit. It answers people's quest for meaning.

At the same time, identity can turn into groupthink, and, if it seizes coercive power, can perpetrate oppression. That's why Adam Smith thought that *laissez-faire* ought to prevail in the church sector. We need free cultural institutions. A mix of identities creates criticism, debate, and competition.

LOST IN THE SHUFFLE

Economists who favor liberalization are routinely caricatured as exponents of flattening human beings down to machines—“economic man”—and flattening social affairs down to blackboard diagrams and mathematical models. Their policy views are said to stem from a faith in perfect competition. These slurs and monkey-shines are regurgitated by crass economists and are regularly aided and abetted by the left-leaning press. —As though *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* and *The Wealth of Nations* had never been written. As though Hayek, Friedman, Coase, Buchanan, Armen Alchian, Vernon Smith, Thomas Sowell, Deirdre McCloskey, etc. have never existed. As though we don't exist.

The Smithian kin of economics have a problem. Even if that character can be fairly well drawn, it does not have a suitable identity. There is a Smithian character, shared by thousands. But there is not today a functioning Smithian identity. If we had a functioning identity, we would be less fringy within economics at large, and we would cultivate our own cultural niche and occupy the center of that sub-domain.

Sometimes such an economist will call himself a “free-market economist.” Some might say “Austrian.” Some will simply say “economist.” None of these work well as an identity for the character favored here.

“Free-market economist” is misleading. First, it is easily misunderstood as the insistence that all markets should be absolutely free—something Smith explicitly rejected, as do most Smithians. Second, it would seem to signify any economist who favors free markets, regardless of other aspects of his character. Although every Smithian economist tends to favor freer markets, not every free-market economist shares the Smithian character. Enthusiastic young libertarians

often cherish simple formulae that need to be overcome, or judiciously weakened, to mature into the “squishy” Smithian character. And, further down the path of life, a mature economist who never did relevant or meaningful research, and instead only practiced and affirmed arid applications of certain scholastic modes of discourse, and deprecated criticism of normal science, would not be a Smithian no matter how strongly he favored free markets. These reasons speak also against “libertarian economist” and “classical liberal economist.” Yet another problem with such names is that, while the Smithian character allows for outspokenness, it is just too pushy to announce political opinions in the name.

REMARKS ON THE AUSTRIAN IDENTITY

The Austrian identity often appeals to young economists with the vision and courage to challenge conventional thinking and the status quo and to defy taboos against taking liberty seriously—hearts and minds that we wish to attract to a Smithian identity. Because Austrianism is a significant and incumbent competitor to Smithianism, some rivalrous marketing may be in order.

The coherence of the Austrian identity, and that name, really stands or falls with infatuation with Ludwig von Mises and his distinctive “praxeological” approach to economics, which conceives of economics in terms of a priori axioms, logical deduction, and categorical conclusions that are apodictically true.

Hayek did not share that approach. He never fashioned himself as a protégé of Mises, and he never promulgated an “Austrian” identity. He wrote generally against rationalistic individualism and in particular he remarked about Mises’ undue rationalism. In a way, Mises is a type of the “man of system” described in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, as Mises’ deductions seem, for example, to neglect that the human “chess pieces” might prefer, even “really really” prefer, systems of coercion—if only as statist means of creating identity focal points—and choose to mobilize so as to impose systems of coercion on themselves and others.

There is much that Hayek shared with Mises—specifically in money and trade-cycle theory and the calculation debate, and generally in classical-liberal vision and motivation—but those elements are not things that fundamentally distinguish the thought of Mises from the thought of a great many other liberal economists who did not hail from Austria. Hayek borrowed a lot from Mises, but he also borrowed from, for example, Hume, Smith, Thornton, Mill, Spencer, Wicksell, Polanyi, and especially LSE colleagues.

When we set aside Mises’ methodological distinctiveness and forgive his crankiness, Mises comes to be seen—like Menger or Böhm-Bawerk—as but one great liberal economist in a line that extends back long before 1871 and that ranges far outside of Austria.

Although I oppose the identity built around Misesian economics, I certainly

would have the Smithian tent be broad enough to include Mises and Austrians of any sort. Indeed, I regard Mises as an epic, heroic figure, the person who, more than any other single person, bridged classical liberalism and modern libertarianism. Murray Rothbard, too, I regard as a great and epic figure, and Israel Kirzner, in my view, deserves a Nobel prize. But I still say that it is time to rethink all that they have to offer within a more Smithian mode.

The essential Austrian impetus, represented by Mises, Rothbard, and Kirzner—despite any disavowals—is to claim a scientific foundation for *laissez-faire* economics. That impetus is misguided. By contrast, the Smithian attitude, in this respect exemplified by Hayek, eschews foundationalist ambitions. It appreciates some by-and-large political-economy verities that allow for and help to justify a presumption of liberty, but, mainly, assumes a posture that is critical of the scientific pretension of interventionist economics.

The wing of Austrianism more associated with Kirzner (as opposed to Rothbard) has attempted to homogenize Mises and Hayek, and externally trades chiefly on Hayek, but the homogenization is illegitimate. The economics of Hayek is, at bottom, closer to that of Smith, Cannan, and Coase than that of Mises. In as much as the character of Austrianism is worthy (that is, Hayekian and hence Smithian), there is no sense in calling it “Austrian” (might as well call it “Scottish”), and in as much as it is distinctive and reasonably identified as “Austrian” (that is, Misesian), the character is not worthy, particularly in light of the availability of the Smithian character.

My Austrian colleague Peter Boettke has suggested that what makes Austrian economics distinctive is its appreciation of knowledge’s richness. That virtue is profound in Hayek and plays a vital role in Kirzner and latter-day Austrians, but it is not particularly strong in Menger, Bohm-Bawerk, Mises, or Rothbard. It is probably at least as strong in Smith as it is in Hayek’s Austrian predecessors. Further, the Mises-Rothbard axiom about people always acting to better their own interests, at least *ex ante*, unduly attributes a rationalism to human conduct, and goes against deeper wisdom about knowledge and human nature. Another problem with Boettke’s attempt to justify the Austrian identity is that appreciation of knowledge’s richness is by no means original with or even all that special to Hayek. For example, there’s Michael Polanyi, arguably Hayek’s equal on knowledge’s richness. And there’s Thomas Schelling, who explained that focalness is a matter of context and interpretation, not necessarily inherent in the logic or information of the situation. When Schelling says that there is no way to prove that a joke is bound to be funny, he nails the essential and pervasive nature of asymmetric interpretation as well as anyone. No one, so far as I know, has made a suitable study, but over the course of centuries many philosophers and social scientists—including Smith, Bentham, Kierkegaard, Schopenhauer, Spencer, the pragmatists—have shown appreciation for knowledge’s richness in ways that Boettke would have to call “Austrian.” A final shortcoming of Boettke’s view is that appreciation of

knowledge's richness, though a great virtue in an economist, simply does not make for any kind of field or research program. It does not make any sense to distinguish a body of research as "Austrian economics" because those studies appreciate knowledge's richness.

Again, the wing of Austrianism associated especially with Kirzner and Boettke externally trades on Hayek. But what really makes for the Austrian identity, even for that wing, is infatuation with Mises and his disciples Rothbard and Kirzner. I urge young classical-liberal economists to discover whether Hayek is really closer to Smith than to Mises, and to think carefully before identifying too strongly with Mises-Rothbard-Kirzner economics.

KEEPING OUR SIGHTS ON THE PUBLIC CULTURE

The development of an identity—functioning in both the professional and public cultures—would require a name. "Smithian" is merely tentative. Smith's works and messages are unwieldy and highly debatable. Further, it is probably never a good idea to build on the identities of individuals (the success of "Christian" notwithstanding). It isn't all in Smith, of course, and there's plenty to dispute and to disagree with. Finally, it might be good for the name to use an exotic term that we can infuse with the meaning we wish it to have.

I do not have any great suggestions. I like "spontaneous order," but "spontaneous order economics" is unwieldy, both in its length and its resistance to abridgement—would we speak of "spontaneous orderists"?, of "spontaneous orderism"?

Here the main issue is the need of identity. If that is something Smithians agree on, they can later focus on the name.

Whatever the name, what would have to follow are adoption, endorsement, and institutionalization. We would want to make use of the name in naming journals, associations, programs, and so on. One tactic would be to slap it onto existing institutions. For example, the present journal could become: *Econ Journal Watch: A Smithian Journal of Economic Criticism*, and later just the *Smithian Journal of Economic Criticism*.

Here the Austrians are exemplary. Murray Rothbard and Israel Kirzner had visions of an Austrian identity, and their followers have carried out those visions with journals, book series, and associations called "Austrian." If that identity is now moribund, it is not from any failure in marketing. For a few decades Austrianism had cornered an important part of the market for young economists who sought an identity that would satisfy libertarian sensibilities, scientific self-image, and disenchantment with formalism.

Other experiences may be instructive. "Public choice," "Chicago school," and "free-market" have functioned as identities, but none have sustained a coherent character and place in the professional and public cultures. One thing that rec-

ommends “Smithian” is the breadth of the frame that it implies about the context of the discourse in which we are engaged. Adam Smith is probably liberalism’s best all-around representative. If “Smithian” is a bit woolly, it is also durable.

Another thing I like about “Smithian” is that it would travel reasonably well. Truth be told, Smithian economists often have more affinity with Smithian types in other fields than they do with “normal” economists.

We must keep our sights on the public culture. “Smithian” is something that journalists, authors, teachers, bloggers, mothers, fathers, clerics, business people, public officials, and community leaders could, in principle, relate to:

— “Oh, yes, Adam Smith, the invisible-hand guy, the Scottish enlightenment, yes, yes! Didn’t he see people as inherently morally reflective and sociable? Wasn’t he also opposed to slavery and imperialism? He was sort of an egalitarian, right? Didn’t he influence the American Founders? Didn’t he call it ‘natural liberty’? But he acknowledged exceptions and thought exceptions should be regarded as exceptions, right? I think he’s onto something with that ‘impartial spectator’ stuff, but I’m not quite sure I get it ...”

Exploring Adam Smith would be a vehicle for developing an identity in economics and society at large.

EMBRACING HETEROGENEITY—WHILE NOT OVERDOING IT

As economists, we all know the desire to address young students or sympathetic readers with the authority of economic science. In teaching introductory economics, we are reluctant to admit the extent to which economists differ. One reason that chemistry is so authoritative is that chemists agree on the things taught in Chemistry 101. Economists would like their auditors to ascribe to them a similar kind of authoritativeness. To acknowledge important differences among economists is to invite doubt about what any particular economist says, and possibly about the way he teaches the course.

Discourse is contextual and affords some wiggle room. The point here is that Smithian economists face great challenges that call for the embrace of at least some heterogeneity. Advanced economics students know about differences. They know that Nobel laureates disagree profoundly about important things. As for the general public, they know that professors disagree. Journalists instinctively look for opposing voices.

Think of all the classrooms and public forums that you are *not* party to, and which are led by economists of other sorts. They too downplay heterogeneity and claim for themselves the authority of a unified economic science. In their hands,

the presupposition of character homogeneity might be dangerous, and it is weakened to the extent that others accentuate heterogeneity.

Embracing heterogeneity has the virtue of being open and honest about the differences. If you tell your students that your judgments on certain matters are not those of all economists, they might appreciate it. Admitting heterogeneity allows one to express one's judgments more freely and fully, to really characterize a penetrating and powerful way of seeing things.

Seeing differences need not sunder all common ground among economists. All economists can share a familiarity with core topics and agree on many basics, such as the need to think through the individual's incentives as she understands the situation. That point of view leads directly into ideas of scarcity and trade-offs. Some such characteristics will continue to span all economists. The vision is for the Smithian economist to function in the profession and the public culture as a recognized and accepted type of economist.

WHAT SHOULD YOUNG SMITHIAN ECONOMISTS DO?

Again, Smithian economics appreciates some by-and-large political-economy verities that allow and help to justify a presumption of liberty, but, mainly, assumes a posture that is knowingly critical of interventionist economics. Smithian economists can make academic careers from pursuing research projects, using whatever methods make sense, that illustrate or refine the by-and-large verities—particularly about the relative fecundity and agreeable creativity of liberal policy—and that criticize misguided policies and illuminate their unintended consequences. Also, they may explore, develop, and refine the limits of and exceptions to the by-and-large verities—for example, asking, When is coercion our friend? Doing so will develop the large themes and messages we have to offer the culture in general—themes and messages that, as I see it, are represented more exquisitely by Adam Smith than by any other thinker. There is plenty of scope for doing Smithian research in many if not most of the normal fields of economics. Many young economists are doing just that. The challenge is to build a Smithian identity among them.

FROM CHARACTER TO IDENTITY

Many a Smithian economist thinks of him- or herself as simply “economist.” But to develop Smithianism we must draw distinctions and stir controversy *within* economics. Most of those who are recognized as “economist” are at considerable variance with the Smithian character. Few maintain Smith's presumption of liberty. It is doubtful that most even subscribe to Smith's conception of liberty—instead gulled by taboos against taking liberty seriously. As for the judging of re-

search questions, modes of discourse, and audiences to address, few clearly exhibit Smithian attitudes.

In the United States, thousands of economists fit a broad Smithian character. Hundreds are members of the Association of Private Enterprise Education, the Public Choice Society, the Southern Economics Association, and the Society for the Development of Austrian Economics.

To function in both the professional and public cultures, Smithianism needs to go from character to identity. That would depend on admitting and embracing some degree of character heterogeneity within economics. Only if heterogeneity is recognized does it become possible to achieve widespread recognition of a Smithian character. As a functioning identity, the contest between it and alternative characters would be more meaningful and productive.

QUESTIONNAIRE ON BUILDING A NEW IDENTITY WITHIN ECONOMICS

[Economists invited to respond to the questionnaire will be contacted individually. Here is a draft of the material and questionnaire that will be sent to each.]

Dear Leading Economist,

The spirit of the questionnaire is exploratory—and more an interview than a survey. Feel free to enter discursive remarks at any point.

The matters treated by the questionnaire are rather philosophical. Your reflection is greatly appreciated.

The questionnaire has been constructed so that one can respond to it without reading the opening essay. However, you are encouraged to read the opening essay, and welcome to refer back to it. But that is not the expectation.

It's OK to keep your remarks brief and to leave individual questions unanswered.

The entirety of your responses will be included in a compendium online and announced at *Econ Journal Watch*.

This is an interview. We will not accept anonymous responses—your identity will be given with your responses.

The cultural context of the questionnaire is primarily the United States and secondarily the Anglosphere. If you wish to make the context more specific or respond in regard to some other context, please specify the countries or regions you have in mind.

I thank you in advance for your attention and participation.

Respectfully, Daniel Klein

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Kindly provide your name:
2. One might think of a character-type of economist that is well represented by the following five economists: Adam Smith, Friedrich Hayek, Milton Friedman, Ronald Coase, and James Buchanan. For that character type, which five *additional* economists would you include in a top-ten list of representatives of that character type? We welcome remarks about each—and feel free to express reservations about the “fit” of any of the five posited so as to better delineate the character type you see as relevant here.
3. List the chief characteristics of such a character type. Elaboration is welcome. (You may wish to refer to the six numbered characteristics in the opening essay—for example by indicating what you would omit, add, or change.)

Now, it will be useful to have a term to denote the character type represented by your answers to questions nos. 2 and 3. That character is the type you see in the set of Smith, Hayek, Friedman, Coase, and Buchanan. (Notice that the initials of that set of five economists are SHFCB.) This questionnaire concerns *that* character type—as you see it, *not* as portrayed in the opening essay. Accordingly, let’s call it “your-SHFCB.”

We proceed in the expectation that there is a fair amount of overlap between the characters that people see in the SHFCB set.

4. Would you agree that your-SHFCB is not well identified today within the professional culture of academic economics?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neutral	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree

5. Would you agree that your-SHFCB is not well identified today within the public culture?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neutral	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree

6. Would you agree that your-SHFCB *stands in need of better identification*, within the professional culture, the public culture, or both?

 Strongly Agree Somewhat Neutral Somewhat Disagree Strongly
 agree agree disagree disagree

7. Would it be beneficial for your-SHFCB to become an identity that functions in the professional and public culture? (We would welcome elaboration as to why or why not.)

8. Would you consider yourself as one who is of the your-SHFCB character type?

 Definitely Yes Somewhat Neutral Somewhat No Definitely
 yes yes no no

Comments (We welcome remarks as to why or why not.):

9. How might you characterize yourself as an economist? Is there any particular “type” of economics you identify with? (Feel free to give multiple identifiers.)

10. List one or two character types other than your-SHFCB, and, for each, explain how it differs from your-SHFCB. (Be as brief or discursive as you like.)

11. Is an economics of a your-SHFCB type *viable* as an accepted identity (assuming it had an effective name) *within academic economics*?

12. Is an economics of a your-SHFCB type *viable* as an accepted identity (assuming it had an effective name) *within the public culture*?

13. An effective name of the identity would be important. Rate the following names for an economics of a your-SHFCB type. Comments welcome.

A. “Smithian economics”

 Excellent Good OK Weak No good Don’t know

Comments:

B. “Smith-Hayek economics”

 Excellent Good OK Weak No good Don’t know

Comments:

KLEIN

C. "Hayekian economics"

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Excellent	Good	OK	Weak	No good	Don't know

Comments:

D. "Spontaneous order economics"

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Excellent	Good	OK	Weak	No good	Don't know

Comments:

E. "Liberal economics"

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Excellent	Good	OK	Weak	No good	Don't know

Comments:

F. "Classical liberal economics"

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Excellent	Good	OK	Weak	No good	Don't know

Comments:

G. "Free-market economics"

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Excellent	Good	OK	Weak	No good	Don't know

Comments:

14. Is there some other name you'd suggest for a your-SHFCEB identity? If so, please do, and explain why.

Thank you again for your attention and participation.

[Go to September 2008 Table of Contents with links to articles](#)

[Go to Archive of **Watchpad** Section](#)