

The Definition of Post-Autistic Economics

by Victor Aguilar

www.axiomaticeconomics.com

Post-Autistic is synonymous with anti-autistic, though with the added and rather arrogant presumption that their [campaign to ban autistic people](#) from economic discourse is already complete; the prefix "post-" actually means "after."

The Post-Autistics define an autistic person as anyone who mentions the axiomatic method, that is, as anyone who makes his assumptions clear. The axiomatic method was used by Euclid and, today, autistics sometimes excel at geometry. The Post-Autistics latched onto this fact and made the defining characteristic of autism to be stating one's assumptions and the defining characteristic of neurotypical to be free-floating expressions of opinion.

The question that divides the axiomatists and the post-autistics is whether or not economists should clearly state their assumptions before proving any theorems from them. The axiomatists believe that economists should make their assumptions clear. The post-autistics prefer to flit about the internet making glib pronouncements on this, that and the other topic.

This procedure is only made possible by the absence of foundations, which relieves them of the necessity of internal consistency. Instead of foundations, post-autistics support their glib opinions with vague references to "statistical fact," though the actual statistics are never cited or are merely anecdotal.

The preference for free-floating opinion over theory was first expressed in an open letter from some French economics students to their instructors. The letter was well-received as,

apparently, the professors did not like being constrained by the then-prevailing requirement that one prove one's assertions any more than the students did.

In the defining manifesto of the Post-Autistic Movement, [James Devine](#) writes:

The original statements by the rebellious French economics students define autistic economics in terms of its one-sided and exclusionary interest in "imaginary worlds," "uncontrolled use of mathematics" and the absence of pluralism of approaches in economics. The hard-core autistic walling off from the societal environment can be seen most strongly in the specific, highly abstract, axiomatic school that the students protested against.

This "diagnosis" by an amateur psychologist has not gone unquestioned. [Lawrence H. White](#) writes:

Autism is a neurological disorder. It is not a methodological approach, an attitude, or a worldview. It is not a variety of solipsism. Implying that the position of one's intellectual opponent is attributable to a neurological disorder is a pathetic debating tactic.

Indeed, while the Post-Autistics fancy themselves as progressives and as the very latest in fashion, their position is almost indistinguishable from that of the German Historical School, which was opposed by Carl Menger in a controversy known as the *methodenstreit*.

In practice, the only difference is that, while the Post-Autistics hurl invectives of madness and mental illness at those they disagree with, Schmoller and his followers are remembered for denouncing theoretical economists as being unpatriotic and under the influence of the English – a nation of shopkeepers – which was abhorrent to German nationalists. But, either way, their invectives have nothing to do with the truth or falsity of their opponent's position.

[Ludwig von Mises](#) writes:

Economics in the second German Reich, as represented by the government-appointed university professors, degenerated into an unsystematic, poorly assorted collection of various scraps of knowledge borrowed from history, geography, technology, jurisprudence, and party politics, larded with deprecatory remarks about the errors in the "abstractions" of the Classical school.

After 1866, the men who came into the academic career had only contempt for "bloodless abstractions." They published historical studies, preferably such as dealt with labor conditions of the recent past. Many of them were firmly convinced that the foremost task of economists was to aid the "people" in the war of liberation they were waging against the "exploiters."

This was the position Schmoller embraced with regard to economics. Again and again he blamed the economists for having prematurely made inferences from quantitatively insufficient material. What, in his opinion, was needed in order to substitute a realistic science of economics for the hasty generalizations of the British "armchair" economists was more statistics, more history, and more collection of "material." Out of the results of such research the economists of the future, he maintained, would one day develop new insights by "induction."

The political significance of the work of the Historical School consisted in the fact that it rendered Germany safe for the ideas, the acceptance of which made popular with the German people all those disastrous policies that resulted in the great catastrophes. The aggressive imperialism that twice ended in war and defeat, the limitless inflation of the early 1920s, the *Zwangswirtschaft* and all the horrors of the Nazi regime were achievements of politicians who acted as they had been taught by the champions of the Historical School.

From this long quotation, I wish to draw the reader's attention to the following passage: "They published historical studies, preferably such as dealt with labor conditions of the recent past. Many of them were firmly convinced that the foremost task of economists was to aid the 'people' in the war of liberation they were waging against the 'exploiters.'" This passage is relevant today because the Post-Autistics' theory, if they have a theory at all, is most certainly Labor Economics.