

The Analects of Boettke

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Abstract

Aphorisms are pithy expressions frequently entailing some paradox, either internally or in juxtaposition with other aphorisms. This article collects and interprets the aphorisms that Peter Boettke uses in the instruction of graduate students in economics. It also examines the role of aphorisms in academic economics, arguing that their value is to be seen primarily in the craft of economics rather than in economic reasoning per se.

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I. Introduction

The Master said, “Study as though you cannot catch up to it, and as though you fear you are going to lose it.”

—Analects 8.17¹

Kǒng Fūzǐ was a scholar and sage of great renown who lived during the Zhou Dynasty. Today he is better known by the Latinized “Confucius,” folding together both his name (Kǒng) and his title (Fūzǐ), which means “Master” or “Teacher.” At the heart of his teachings is the idea that respect for social norms can ennoble individual character. By observing customary manners (*lǐ*), or ritual propriety), one internalizes their meaning and thus comes to exhibit authoritative conduct (*rén*, or benevolence) by which one becomes more fully human (i.e., follows the *dao*).² Living in a time of political

* Thanks to the other contributors to this volume, Steven Horwitz, and David Prychitko for their invaluable help in gathering the list of aphorisms. And of course my deepest gratitude goes to Peter Boettke. See Pete, I was listening.

¹ Throughout I reference the Ames and Rosemont (1998) edition of *The Analects of Confucius*, by page number when it is their annotations and by book and aphorism number when it comes from the text proper.

² A summary of how to best translate these difficult technical terms comes in the front matter to Ames and Rosemont (1998).

tumult, his philosophy was meant to grapple with a practical dilemma: “what is a moral minister to do in the service of an immoral ruler?” (Ames and Rosemont, 1998, p.12). He attracted a body of students that carried on and extended his philosophy. The oral tradition they passed down led to *The Analects of Confucius*, a collection of aphorisms encapsulating his teachings.³

My intention in this essay is twofold. Like Kǒng Fūzǐ’s students, I hope to capture in writing an oral tradition, in this case one permeating the economics graduate program at George Mason University. The current focal point of this tradition is undoubtedly Peter Boettke, the central figure and mentor that has defined the Mason experience for so many of us. Though not all of these aphorisms originated with him (and such are the perils of reconstructing an oral tradition), he is their chief exponent to the Mason graduate students. Additionally, unlike Kǒng Fūzǐ’s students, I offer explicit interpretations of their meaning, for two reasons. First, though not all of these aphorisms are original to Boettke, I hope to encapsulate how he uses them as a pedagogical strategy. Great mentorship merits close scrutiny. My second and related reason for offering my own comments is to situate the meaning of these sayings within a broader theory of the epistemic function of aphorisms. More simply: why use aphorisms?

Aphorisms may seem out of place in economics. Economists are scientists. We have models, theorems, and the occasional lemma. Aphorisms are the domain of literati, preachers, mystics, and antiquated philosophers (or worse, their hagiographers). Economists place a premium on systematic thinking, huge quantities of data, and careful, quantitative inferences. Aphorisms feel disorganized, anecdotal, and *ad hoc*. Even Austrian economists such as Boettke have traditionally cherished systematic thinking, deriving economic propositions from the action axiom (Mises, 1949) or exact definitions (Menger, 1883). Before examining the aphorisms, then, I examine their function with a special emphasis on academic life.

II. Aphorisms in Academic Life

The classic definition of aphorism comes – appropriately enough, since he is both the world’s most famous lexicographer and a noted

³ The aphorisms are usually preceded by the formula “The Master said...” This form lives on in the modern fortune cookie’s “Confucius say...”

aphorist – from Samuel Johnson: “a maxim; a precept contracted in a short sentence; an unconnected position” (Gross, 1983, p.vii). “Unconnected” is the point of contention. It appears to denote a retreat from systematic, scientific thought rather than an invitation to it. Morson (2003), going so far as to call aphorisms “fragments from the breakdown of reason,” argues that paradox is actually constitutive of their nature. He distinguishes aphorisms from both dicta and genuinely scientific hypotheses. Where paradoxical aphorisms invite the aesthetic contemplation of profound mysteries, dicta are religious or rationalistic statements that point to some immanently knowable cosmic truth and are meant to silence dissent. Both are unconnected; whether inviting or dismissing, they serve as slogans. But the hypothesis, a manifestly provisional assertion, is inseparable from the context of its supporting evidence. Of these three, only the intrinsically connected hypothesis can serve as a medium for scientific inquiry.

Two problems plague this analysis. First, separability does not imply separation. Aphorisms are pithy statements that are provocative when removed from their original context. This is a long way from implying that their original context lacks system or science. Evolution is no less scientific for the saying, “Mutation is random, but selection is not.” Likewise, one could hardly accuse Robert Nozick of unsystematic or careless thought when he sums up his libertarian philosophy: “From each as he chooses, to each as he is chosen” (Nozick, 1974, p.160). Aphorisms can summarize rather than curtail academic inquiry. There is a real danger that such slogans come to substitute for genuine critical thinking and substantive intellectual engagement. But in itself, the “unconnectability” of a phrase does not tell us whether the idea it expresses is actually unconnected.

The second problem with treating aphorisms as unconnected is that it ignores the context of their *use*. The idea that an aphorism expresses may or may not be unconnected to a systematic body of thought, but its deployment *is* connected to the practice of its speaker. Aphorisms’ value and function are found in practice, not in theory. Shortcuts are rightly suspect in proofs or the evaluation of evidence, but indispensable to all sorts of human activity, especially in its social dimension. Aphorisms, being constituted by language, can serve as cognitive shortcuts not only for but also between individuals. One such use, as noted above, is to silence dissent or stir emotion

through the use of dicta or slogans. These deployments of aphorisms look less like scientific truth-seeking and more like positional status-seeking (Davis, 1999). What value might they hold, then, for academic economics?

To answer this question I distinguish between the epistemology of economic propositions and their epistemic “social construction.” Epistemics underdetermines epistemology (or vice versa). It is beyond the scope of this essay to defend this distinction in any detail,⁴ but I do maintain that the properties of *economics* as a branch of knowledge need not directly correspond to the properties of the *craft of economics*. So, for instance, an economic proposition can be value-neutral even if the human activity of proclaiming, attacking, applying, or just learning it never is. Recognizing this distinction also helps explain why graduate school, which is in one sense all about ideas and academic inquiry, often feels more like vocational training.

Aphorisms, I posit, are invaluable for the craft of economics. They do not substitute for systematic investigation but rather aid it. Economic ideas are distinct from but always mediated through human agency. A capacity for abstract thought might not entail a like capacity for scholarly activity. Academic economists share important traits with – indeed, are instances of – the agents we study (Peart and Levy, ch.11). We have but 24 hours in a day, and so must allocate scarce time between research and other activities, as well as between different forms, topics, and sources of research. Our cognition is limited, so we rely on mental shortcuts when ordering our actions, including social interactions with our colleagues. Scholarly activity is no guarantor of good economics, but it does tend to lay the groundwork for it by increasing the chances of an important insight and preparing the economist to capitalize on it. Effective aphorisms indirectly enhance economic ideas by directly enhancing economic scholarship. They do so by summarizing existing ideas and thus serving as a handy shortcut for applied research, or by offering cognitive shortcuts for the craft of economics itself.

The connection between aphorisms and craftsmanship is nowhere more explicit than in the most prominent Western aphoristic tradition, Biblical wisdom literature. The “wisdom” to which these books make frequent reference is not abstract, cosmic

⁴ A slightly longer discussion can be found in my review (Martin, 2009a) of Klammer (2007).

theology, but the practical knowledge of daily life. “Craftsmanship or skill *in any area of human endeavor* lies at the heart of biblical wisdom” (Van Leeuwen, 2007, p.87, emphasis in original). Everyday practical knowledge is precisely the kind of knowledge most valuably transmitted and stored in compact form. Hence the utility of aphorisms, maxims, proverbs, and the like, which serve as “orientation in the thick of everyday activity” (Von Rad, 1970, p.26). To call aphorisms “fragments,” dismiss them for being unscientific, or claim that they only serve the vanity of status-seeking is to miss their vital function in all spheres of human practice, including the craft of economics. Dr. Johnson says it best:

Perhaps the excellence of aphorisms consists not so much in the expression of some rare or abstruse sentiment, as in the comprehension of some obvious and useful truth in a few words. We frequently fall into error and folly, not because the true principles of action are not known, but because, for a time, they are not remembered; and he may therefore be justly numbered among the benefactors of mankind who contracts the great rules of life into short sentences, that may be easily impressed on the memory, and taught by frequent recollection to recur habitually to the mind. (Samuel Johnson, *Rambler* #175, November 19, 1751).⁵

III. Boettke Say...

What follows is a presentation and interpretation of some of Boettke’s favored aphorisms for graduate instruction. For the sake of brevity and to avoid needless repetition in my comments, I group the aphorisms into related clusters. The grouping is meant only to serve my own purposes. Rather than elaborate on each one, I instead use them as groups to develop a more linear account of Boettke’s pedagogical approach. Needless to say, what follows does not include all of his favored phrases or statements. Sometimes the same statement takes different forms; paraphrasing and idealized versions are used where necessary. Where possible, an original source or inspiration is identified.

⁵ Accessed at <http://www.samueljohnson.com/aphorism.html>

"Economics is a pair of glasses that we use to see the world more clearly."⁶

"A supply and demand graph is the sexiest thing in the world."

"Do rational choice as if the choosers were human."⁷

"Economic man is caught between alluring hopes and haunting fears."⁸

"Saying that people respond to incentives doesn't tell me anything unless you tell me how they understand those incentives."⁹

At the heart of Boettke's pedagogical strategy is a deep and abiding passion for the economic way of thinking. Economic logic is simply beautiful. But economics is not merely contemplative. The glasses metaphor highlights a real danger: becoming fixated on the glasses – economic theory – rather than on the world they allow us to see. For economics to move beyond blackboard theory to being the tool of a craftsman, it must be wielded on a suitable object. The object of understanding is the world, not the theory.

The economic way of thinking entails looking at the social world as the result of purposive individual behavior. As students we were constantly reminded: "demand curves slope down." In this, Boettke's approach overlaps strongly with any good teacher of microeconomics. But for understanding the real world, models populated by Veblen's "lightning calculators of pleasure and pain" won't do (Veblen, 1898, p.389). Man's weakness of intellect must be given equal weight with his weakness of will. Moreover, the failure of robotic maximization models is twofold: the "alluring hopes" of entrepreneurial creativity matter as well. The economist must take account of both man's fallibility and his ingenuity.

"Read Mises as a Hayekian and Hayek as a Misesian."

"Mises and Hayek are two sides of the same coin."

"Economics studies exchange and the institutions in which exchange takes place."¹⁰

"It is not the popular movement, but the traveling of the minds of men who sit in the seat of Adam Smith that is really serious and worthy of all attention."¹¹

⁶ According to David Prychitko, this comes from Don Lavoie, his and Boettke's dissertation advisor.

⁷ According to Boettke, this comes from or is inspired by Elinor Ostrom.

⁸ This is Jaffe's (1976) description of Menger's economic man.

⁹ According to Boettke, this comes from Douglass North.

¹⁰ Paraphrased from Buchanan (1964).

“You gotta have the 3 P’s to get the 3 I’s.”

If Boettke’s economics is a set of eyeglasses, Mises and Hayek are undoubtedly the two lenses. Both are necessary for a rounded view of society (Horwitz, 2004). Hayekian spontaneous order theory shorn of Misesian microfoundations floats adrift into a near-mystical account of social coordination, while a Hayekian reading of Mises pays due diligence to the institutional contingencies that shape patterns of human interaction. But Mises and Hayek do not stand alone. They are part of the broadly catallactic tradition in economics, or what Boettke (2007) refers to as the “mainline” of economics (as opposed to the “mainstream”). The Austrian School occupies a special place in that tradition, but it starts with the Scottish Enlightenment (Hume and Smith) and includes the French Liberal School (Say and Bastiat), the Virginia School (Buchanan and Tullock), the Bloomington School (Ostrom and Ostrom), and the UCLA approach to price theory (Alchian and Demsetz), among others. Rather than maximization of objective functions, this tradition emphasizes exchange, which is at once individually rational, interpersonal, and institutionally embedded (Buchanan, 1964).

Institutional or social embeddedness is also the key to taking seriously economic man’s cognitive limitations and how he grapples with them (Boettke and Storr, 2002). It is through institutions that individuals “in all their given variety and complexity, sometimes good and sometimes bad, sometimes intelligent and more often stupid” (Hayek, 1948, p.12) are able to coordinate their activities, generate social order, and realize the gains from trade. Economic calculation in the market process is the prime example. The “3 P’s” of private property, prices, and profit and loss enable the “3 I’s” of incentives for production, information for coordination, and innovation. Critically, this understanding of the market serves as a guide for applying the Mises-Hayek economic way of thinking to other (non-market) institutional settings as well, illuminating the role that social structures play in coordinating human activity by both aligning incentives and generating knowledge (Martin, 2009b). Exchange is not limited to markets, but it does take different forms depending on the rules of the game in question. This approach emphasizes ecological rationality (Smith, 2008), leading to an understanding of

¹¹ From Lord Acton, quoted in Buchanan (1964).

social behavior in which institutions do the heavy lifting in driving differences across time and place.

“Look out the window!”

“Hunt big game.”

“Why be boring?”¹²

“Find puzzles where history defies what logic dictates.”

“There’s no such thing as ‘no theory,’ only inarticulate and undefended theories or articulated and defended ones.”

“The Dragnet theory of social science – ‘Just the facts, ma’am’ – doesn’t work.”

Armed with Austrian-brand glasses, Boettke encourages his students to look out the window rather than at the blackboard for questions worth answering. Interesting questions trump sophisticated techniques. No matter how good the data is on the elasticity of the demand for peanuts in mid-1930’s New Hampshire, both research and teaching are better served by exciting and unorthodox applications of the economic way of thinking. Boettke’s students have thus done research on pirates (Storr, 2004; Leeson, 2009), ancient Greek prisons (D’Amico, 2010), medieval German beer (Thomas, 2009), and hawala networks (Schaeffer, 2008). The gravity of the question also matters. Better to do the best we can to address an important topic than to exhaustively describe a trivial phenomenon. Economic development and the institutions that enable it are a central research topic for Mason students, including country case studies (Powell, 2003; Beaulier and Subrick, 2006), the role of entrepreneurship (Powell, 2008), the importance of media freedom (Coyne and Leeson, 2009), and the difficulties of post-war reconstruction (Coyne, 2008) and post-disaster recovery (Chamlee-Wright and Storr, 2010).

But the emphasis on understanding the world does not exclude an interest in analytic puzzles. Students are told to look for patterns of social behavior that apparently contradict economic logic. The purpose is not to undermine economics per se, but rather a challenge to deftly employ the economic way of thinking to disentangle the puzzle. This approach shines through most clearly in the research of Boettke’s students on anarchy and self-governance (Boettke, 2005; Stringham, 2005, 2007; Powell and Stringham, 2009). Standard theory

¹² According to Boettke, this comes from Andrei Shleifer.

holds that state enforcement of laws is necessary except for small groups of homogeneous agents with low time preferences. By contrast, Boettke's students have found that large groups playing for large stakes (Stringham, 2003; Leeson, 2008a), heterogeneous agents (Leeson, 2008b), and high-time preference criminals (Skarbek, 2010) are all capable of self-governance. Importantly, all these empirical studies are not mere counterexamples but also employ both rational choice and institutional analysis to explain their results. They unabashedly use the catallactic point of view to illuminate facts and arrive at a coherent understanding of the social world.

"When you first enter graduate school, write promiscuously on topics that interest you. When you find one that you fall in love with, settle down, be faithful, and write a dissertation."

"Writing is research."¹³

"Consistently apply the seat of your pants to the seat of a chair."

"Don't get it right, get it written."

"Editors edit."¹⁴

"Publications + Teacher Evaluations – Lunch Tax = Job"

A "Lunch Tax" is someone who decreases rather than increases the pleasantness of social interactions with one's colleagues. So in the equation above, both teacher evaluations and one's collegiality play a crucial role in getting a job. But whenever he writes this equation on the board, Boettke always clarifies that good evaluations and collegiality are but necessary conditions. Publications have a much higher coefficient.

Consequently, the success of Boettke's students correlates highly with their adherence to this set of maxims. What can be difficult to grasp for incoming graduate students is that writing is constitutive of the learning process, not a mere product. This includes both learning what to write about and learning how to write. The incisive criticism and feedback of one's peers sometimes creates a desire to perfect a paper before presenting it or, worse, to not write at all until the subject is mastered. But mastery only arises from the process of articulating and refining one's arguments in response to criticism.

¹³ This and the next two aphorisms in this group all come from or paraphrase James Buchanan.

¹⁴ Robert Tollison is the proximate source of this saying for Mason students.

Boettke's colleague Richard Wagner often tells students, "Thinking without writing is just daydreaming." The willingness to write, rewrite, and write yet again is one aspect of the economists' craft that can only be related, not transmitted. All great teachers confront this boundary, ably expressed by Kǒng Fūzǐ himself:

The Master said, "I do not open the way for students who are not driven with eagerness; I do not supply a vocabulary for students who are not trying desperately to find the language for their ideas. If on showing students one corner they do not come back to me with the other three, I will not repeat myself." (*Analects* 7.8)

"Writing a paper is raising your hand to make a point in the conversation of the profession."

"Become an input into others' production functions."

"Unconventional ideas need to be stated in conventional form."

"Think like a Misesian, write like a Popperian."

"Never fear the harshest criticism of your position, but always fear its weakest defense."

"Win the game on your own terms."

The economist's craft is socially embedded. This set of aphorisms is meant to guide the young (or at least new) economist through the social dimension of his craft. Klamer (2009) analogizes this social dimension to a conversation. Boettke's students occupy a strange position in relation to that conversation. On the one hand, they have chosen to live their professional lives engaged in it and, like all serious scholars, depend critically on interactions with their peers to refine and inspire their own thinking. On the other hand, there are aspects of the professional conversation – notably its systematic scientific and statist prejudices – that they recognize as harmful both to understanding and to human well-being (Hayek, 1952). This undeniable tension in the relationship between Boettke's mainline approach and the mainstream vision of economics is the primary culprit creating the apparent paradoxes between and within Boettke's aphorisms. This leads us back to Kǒng Fūzǐ.

Confucianism grapples with a parallel paradox. Recall that for Kǒng Fūzǐ the observance of social norms paves the way for the elevation of one's character. Manners cultivate morals (Hazlitt, 1964,

ch.11). But entrenched in the norms of Kǒng Fūzǐ's time was a powerful devotion to authority, and those in authority rarely shared the sage's enlightened sentiments. His practical project was thus both participatory and transformative. Participation in social norms was to serve a dual end: both to improve one's own character and to situate oneself to be heard, from whence social norms could be improved. No path to exemplary character exists outside manners, but manners themselves need improvement. Not coincidentally, pithy and paradoxical aphorisms were his students' tool of choice for navigating this thorny terrain.

Boettke likewise seeks to transform the economic conversation along Austrian lines, but believes that doing so necessarily involves meeting the profession's standards so as to improve Austrian scholarship. A professional conversation hostile to mainline ideas is not an excuse to disengage, but an invitation to do better and better scholarly work. Just as with Confucianism, rising to the challenge of conversation as it exists serves a dual purpose: both improving one's own scholarship and getting a seat at the table from which to be heard. But this strategy is neither an invitation to scientism nor a "middle way" between the mainline and mainstream. *Both* challenging conventional wisdom *and* meeting the highest scholarly standards are necessary constituents of success. Bring Mises into the conversation, but do so in the Popperian language of "conjectures and refutations." Getting a seat at the table requires bringing a firmly economic but also unique perspective to bear on questions that are interesting and important to the mainstream, but showing that the mainline perspective has more to offer in answering them. Win *the* game (academic economics), but do so on your own terms. Here virtue lies not in the middle, but in the paradox.

Boettke's aphorisms extol neither dogmatic intransigence nor obsequious capitulation, but entrepreneurial dissent on the margin. His students are told to acknowledge their dependence on the academic world of economics to foster their intellectual growth, but simultaneously to imagine how they might change that world.

As in all other fields advance is here achieved by our moving within an existing system of thought and endeavouring by a process of piecemeal tinkering, or "immanent criticism," to make the whole more consistent both internally as well as with the facts to which the rules are applied. Such "immanent

criticism” is the main instrument of the evolution of thought, and an understanding of this process the characteristic aim of an evolutionary (or critical) as distinguished from the constructivist (or naïve) rationalism. (Hayek, 1973, p.118)

“Economics is not just a game played by smart people.”¹⁵

“Economics is a prophylactic against popular fallacies.”¹⁶

“Economics puts parameters on people’s utopias.”¹⁷

“Wishing it so doesn’t make it so.”

“It takes varied iterations to force alien concepts on reluctant minds.”¹⁸

“The role of the economist is to teach the principles of spontaneous order so that individuals may become informed participants in their own democratic process.”¹⁹

“Economics is a tool of critique, not an engine of advocacy.”

Economics is a public science (Buchanan, 1996). The academic conversation is not the only one at stake. Boettke calls on his students to recognize the economist’s critical role in the public square. He is fond of Hayek’s claim that “it is the peculiar task of economics to demonstrate to men how little they know about what they think they can design” (Hayek, 1988, p.76). The behavioral pillars of the catallactic tradition, scarcity and radical uncertainty, wreak havoc with many of the schemes of would-be reformers. But utopian thinking dies hard. The economist must repeatedly remind Caesar that he is mortal.

But the economist himself must also be humble; he is not a “high priest” but a “lowly philosopher” (Boettke et al., 2006). He is never competent as an economist to impose a system of social organization. Boettke takes seriously Mises’s appropriation of the Weberian ideal of value freedom as useful not only for descriptive social science but also policy analysis. The analyst maintains value freedom by taking the ends of his interlocutor as given and evaluating the feasibility, effectiveness, and unintended consequences of the proposed schemes for realizing them. Often they are found wanting. Hence,

¹⁵ This comes from Gary Becker.

¹⁶ This line appears in *Simons’ Syllabus* (Simons, 1983, p.3).

¹⁷ This comes from David Prychitko.

¹⁸ This is a paraphrase of Herbert Spencer (1879, p.vi), but to Boettke by way of Buchanan.

¹⁹ This is inspired by Buchanan (1996).

Boettke is also fond of Mises's proclamation that "liberalism is applied economics" (Mises, 1922, p.154).

Boettke's commitment to critique over advocacy might seem incompatible with his commitment to classical liberalism. I submit that it is not contradictory but only paradoxical, on at least two levels. The first parallels the paradoxes of an economic mainliner in today's mainstream academic conversation. And here too Boettke's advice is to use political dialogue as a challenge to improve one's arguments, but never to water down the message. He is no fan of middle ground policy measures. The liberal economist's ideas will be diluted beyond recognition by the time they reach the halls of power no matter what; better to stand on principle than feign being an efficiency expert for the state (Hutt, 1971). The second and deeper paradox goes to the heart of the mainline, catallactic approach: in critiquing constructivist schemes to shape society (whether conservatively or progressively), the liberal economist is *de facto* arguing for self-governance. The key is that he does not seek to impose any design of his own, but only to point people down the path to governing themselves. The economist is a teacher of the principles of self-organization. As Kǒng Fūzǐ notes, all such a teacher can do is supply a grammar for the eager student to formulate his own ideas. The economist's role is not to dictate those ideas but to enable citizens to act as social, cultural, and institutional entrepreneurs in devising ever better ways of relating to one another (Ostrom, 1997).

IV. Conclusion: Economists as Citizen Scholars

Economists are citizens of both their polities and the republic of science (Polanyi, 1962). Citizenship calls for critical engagement. Neither withdrawal from the mainstream conversations nor blind submission to dominant trends will prevail in either sphere. Like Kǒng Fūzǐ's students, Boettke's must grapple with paradox. The scholar should be humble and always seeking to improve his arguments, but not be afraid to stand up for a definite point of view. He should be steeped in the wisdom of economists past but always looking for the cutting edge of scholarly progress. He must be scientific but not scientistic, principled but not dogmatic, entertaining but serious, philosophically informed while empirically grounded, and value relevant but not blindly ideological.

Ultimately, following Boettke's aphorisms means improving the world by first improving one's own scholarship. But whereas Kǒng

Fūzǐ counseled abandoning a kingdom that had completely abandoned the *dao* (*Analects* 8.13), Boettke's students will not abandon the economics profession to the alliance of scientism and statism. The mantle of economics is too important to abandon to those who, in the mistaken belief that they can stand above all bias and understand the social world with the antiseptic white gloves of a technician, would endlessly cede more power to the state.

The analects of Boettke tell a story. Economics, to thrive, must be done as if economists are human. Economists do not stand outside the world they study, but are themselves subject to the same limitations of will and intellect that make social structures and institutions vital to their success. Appropriately enough, the first sentence of the first book of the Austrian tradition Boettke seeks to promote reads: "All things are subject to the law of cause and effect" (Menger, 1873, p.51). This includes the economic craftsman himself. Recognizing both the limitations and the opportunities that his social environment provides enables the economist to leverage the paradoxical tensions of the academic and public conversations to be a better and more successful scholar. A great deal is at stake in getting the economics right, and in getting the right economics heard. I for one am grateful to be equipped with Boettke's aphorisms and the alluring hope they provide to change the economic conversation for the better.

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