

Thus, when their grip on political power slipped, the end came in short order. Suburbanism, maternalists' lack of intergenerational influence, and the resurgence of equity feminism as a cultural force also played roles.

Although the Reagan years saw efforts to resurrect certain maternalist policies, the cultural change of the previous generation was too profound. The male breadwinner model of family economy seemed chauvinistic, even to advocates of family wages. The author concludes with modest suggestions for advancing a neomaternalist idea of the American family—one compatible with the deep cultural and political shifts of the past four decades (169).

Carlson's work is excellent: The histories are well-written and often gripping, and most sections are concise enough to hold the nonspecialist's interest. He employs little jargon while providing helpful summaries of key policies and movements. The book is well-edited, with two exceptions: The repeated misuse of "principle" for "principal," and a typesetter's error in reproducing ratios from a table (157).

The book does, however, leave the reader hungry for more. Coverage of the transitional period of 1964 to 1982 is frustratingly brief. The detailed analysis of policy players and debates, which characterized Carlson's treatment of previous eras, is missing for the seventies and beyond. Perhaps that is material for a separate book—one to be eagerly anticipated.

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## The Theory of the Individual in Economics: Identity and Value

**John B. Davis**

London: Routledge, 2003 (206 pages)

This is an interesting and challenging book. It raises a central but insufficiently discussed question: What explains individuality, and how is it shaped? Economic personalists usually investigate how persons structure economics and society but rarely do they explicitly theorize about individual/personal identity. (For Davis, Professor of History and Philosophy of Economics at the University of Amsterdam, individualism and personalism are, in fact, synonymous.) Even more interestingly perhaps, the book also highlights crucial "blind-spots" in the dominant academic "discourse."

Another of Davis's objectives is to show (1) how a given definition of the individual—the dominant Lockean concept of individuality, which constitutes the foundation of neoclassical theory—results in the destruction of the very notion of individuality, while (2) paradoxically, the alternative tradition of sociological/holistic identity leads to a fruitful discussion of both modern individuality and its place in society and economics. Davis thus inserts his theoretic research into an interpretation of the intellectual history of the twentieth century.

Davis's analyses are encumbered, however, by the arbitrary exclusion of important approaches to individualism and by an insufficiently clear distinction between anthropology and economics. Both deficiencies are worsened (or perhaps prompted) by his narrow definition of economics. This is most paradoxical because a more balanced treatment of the subject would have strengthened the conclusions that Davis seems to favor.

Because Davis's analysis deals, to an important extent, with the inner contradictions of methodological individualism and holism (17), I introduce the term *anthropology* to simplify the presentation. It is increasingly recognized that our concepts of the human being and of the societal systems are systematically interrelated, that is, part and parcel of competing anthropological paradigms. Davis (who does not use this term) comes to the same conclusion on page 111. This integrated (sociopersonal) concept of anthropology, which was pioneered by Max Scheler, has recently been put forward forcefully by Marcel Gauchet in *La Condition Historique* (2003).

In chapter 1, Davis notes that individualism is fundamental to *contemporary* society and that the Lockean theory of the individual (which originates in the Cartesian form of Platonic idealism) captures the essence of the *modernistic* understanding of the individual as ideal disengaged (and therefore unchanging), and solipsistic (essentially unrelated to others) subjectivity. (I emphasize contemporary and modernistic because the use of these concepts rather than of that of modernity is an important characteristic of Davis's approach.) He then shows how the Lockean individual constitutes the core of the economic agent of neoclassical theory, the latter merely engaging in examining how this unchanging individual operates economic choices. Davis finally demonstrates how this idealistic and solipsistic definition has resulted in the atrophy of individual identity, culminating in the nonexistence of individuality in postmodernism and cognitive economics (chap. 5).

Davis then proceeds to show that the notion of an "imbedded individual," which originates in the holistic approach, leads to a resurgence of a more powerful concept of individuality (chaps. 6, 7, section 4). He thus offers a stimulating conclusion that condemns the failure of neoclassical economics and its Lockean individualism and promises a fruitful future for the alternative concept of the "embedded individual" and the various "heterodox economic" approaches based on it (chap. 10).

This practical conclusion is extremely illuminating of central trends in contemporary Western ideology but insufficiently precise when Davis seeks to elaborate a theory of individuality. His discussion suffers from epistemological difficulties, which I will discuss in the remainder of the text. These difficulties are ultimately due, in my view, to his reluctance (1) to clearly define economics, as this would have weakened his case that heterodox economics is the only available alternative, and (2) to "come down" to an unambiguous understanding of individuality as ultimately autonomous. They are, moreover, considerably worsened by the occultation from the discussion of classical economics and of alternative concepts of individualism.

Let us look at the occultation before we discuss the conclusion. Original classical economics (Adam Smith and his nineteenth-century followers) is silently excluded from Davis's analyses. He states cryptically: "Within orthodox economics I distinguish between neoclassical ... and mainstream.... Austrian economics is orthodox in its view of the individual as an autonomous being, but it does not share neoclassical ... views of what makes [the] individual autonomous" (16). Yet, he nowhere discusses this Austrian vision. Classical individuality is mentioned on pages 24–25, but the crucial summary of section 9.5 ill corresponds to this brief discussion.

Davis thus limits his theoretic research to the contributions of *contemporary* "mainstream" and "heterodox" economics. These (undiscussed) epistemological options render the discussion of "individuality in economics" very cumbersome because they prevent Davis from raising the central questions of *modernity and individuality* and from explicitly investigating how individuals uses economics.

Original classical economics posited that the (anthropologically given) individual exchanges with other individuals in order to reduce scarcity. Classical economists opposed exchanges between autonomous individuals (through markets) to cooperation between holistic dependents (within organistic societies). The latter was seen (by Marx, for one) as the systemic base of the Asiatic model (oriental despotism). (Davis briefly mentions, without comment, this most significant opposition on page 42.) The major characteristic of this autonomous agent is to be an entrepreneur of his activity of economic maximization through exchanges. (Note that the index of this book on "the theory of the individual in economics" has no entry for *entrepreneur*.)

As to the interaction between anthropology and economics, the classical economists investigated how concern with economic maximization could be detrimental to the development of individuality (e.g., alienation) or a cause for its blooming (creativity and dynamic entrepreneurship). These questions cannot be raised if the subject matter of economics—exchanges to reduce scarcity—is not identified (as the classical economists did and as Davis wishes it were [14]).

Davis encounters an even worse problem in defining individuality and in discussing *modern* individuality exclusively in idealistic Lockean terms. Three mistakes follow. First, he reasons as if Platonism (i.e., theoretic idealism) had uninterruptedly dominated Western thought from its dawn and as if there had been no Aristotelian-Thomist-realist intellectual revolution in the thirteenth century when the bases of *modern individualism* were laid. "Thus Locke advanced the first philosophical theory of personal identity," he claims (5).

Second, Davis does not mention the undisputed historical fact that individuality originated in Christianity, at latest in the fourth century, when the Greeks moved from substance to person in the context of the Trinitarian disputes.

Third, he ignores the other historical fact of a continuous nonidealistic individualism, which led to the development of contemporary individualism, from the German Romantics to the French Personalists, culminating with Buber and Levinas, to mention only names that are well known. A cursory look at the index shows no entries for *will*,

*embodiment*, or *existential project*. Gloria Zúñiga provides a useful survey of the alternative approaches to individualism in issue 4:2 of this journal.

These “blind spots” enable Davis to conclude his ideological critique that neo-classical Lockean individualism has failed (which is an important though not novel finding) and that ill-defined “embeddedness” offers the only alternative to individualism. They also cause him to hesitate when elaborating his theory of individuality between (1) defining embeddedness (or holism) as social forces *determining* individuality (in his concluding comments where he favorably comments on Parfit’s negation of individuality, 188), and (2) suggesting (elsewhere, in chapter 6) that the individual is merely *influenced* by his environment with which he shapes his individuality. Yet, Davis clearly expresses his “personal preference” for the second “view” (in sections 6.4.2 and 6.5 and in his remarkable conclusions on page 148).

In conclusion, and to be a bit provocative, I am very pleased by Davis’s demonstration that the dominant academic discourse leads at best to the conclusion that “embedded” beings *might* become individuals. Christians know that human nature is ambiguous and that the basic characteristic of the Western ethos—individuality—remains shaky as long as it is not rooted in its Christian tradition and continuously provided with the embodying (incarnation) of the Trinitarian “prototype” (of autonomous individualities interacting with each other) into the project of human individualization. It is also scientific to recognize (1) that this ethos is opposed to the (presently dominant?) pagan ethos of holism and impersonal irresponsibility and (2) that Western rationality has realized that individuality remains the most potent instrument for reducing scarcity, which characterizes the human condition. Modern science thus supports the Christian ethos and vice versa, while postmodern irrationalism does away with both. Davis’s analyses thus (indirectly) demonstrate that the rational Western construction of individualism remains “unstable” without Christian inputs.

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## Friedrich Hayek: A Biography

**Alan Ebenstein**

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Alan Ebenstein received a Ph.D. in political philosophy from the London School of Economics. He is the author or coauthor of seven other books on the history of economic and political theory.

With this book, Ebenstein provides the first full-scale biography considering both Hayek’s work *and* life. An important source, besides Hayek’s works, both published and unpublished, are interviews with friends, companions, family members, and others who knew Hayek personally. Ebenstein follows Hayek’s life chronologically and