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Prof. Bryan Caplan
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Dear Dr. Caplan:

In your paper, *Why I Am Not an Austrian Economist*, you write (p. 16):

In short, the principled *Austrian objections to mathematics and econometrics (M&E) fail. This does not mean, however, that M&E are immune to a weaker criticism: to wit, that they simply have not delivered the goods. When Mises wrote* Human Action *in 1949, economists' use of M&E was still in its infancy. There is now nearly fifty years' worth of research using M&E. The science of economics has made progress, but how much of it is due to the use of M&E?*

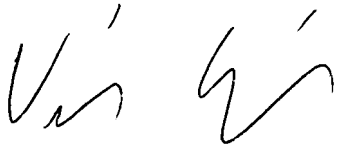
Let us consider the question empirically. Here are a few of the best new ideas to come out of academic economics since 1949:

1. *Human capital theory*
2. *Rational expectations macroeconomics*
3. *The random walk view of financial markets*
4. *Signaling models*
5. *Public choice theory*
6. *Natural rate models of unemployment*

7. *Time consistency*
8 *The Prisoner's Dilemma, coordination games, and hawk-dove games*
9. *The Ricardian equivalence argument for debt-neutrality*
10. *Contestable markets*

Formal mathematics was the main language used to present these ideas in academic journals. But was math instrumental in the discovery of these ideas? Or did the journal articles merely take an interesting intuition and then work backwards to determine what mathematical assumptions implied it? Out of the whole list, there are few plausible cases where mathematics was more than an afterthought: maybe Idea #2, and possibly #3. Even there, intuition, not math, probably played the leading role. I invite others to come up with their own "best ideas" list to repeat this casual experiment.

Very well, Dr. Caplan, my "best idea" was *Axiomatic Theory of Economics*. You tell me: Is mathematics an afterthought in my book?



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