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PROFESSOR LORD ROBBINS

Lionel Robbins has, over the years, made a number of fundamental contributions to the history of economic thought and economic method. To a discipline which was dominated overwhelmingly in the English-speaking world by the Marshallian tradition he reestablished the very valuable influence of Swedish and Austrian thought, as well as that of English thought outside the Cambridge school. In his own writings on doctrinal history his enormous erudition united with as close an approximation as is possible to impartial and dispassionate observation constitutes an outstanding model for future scholarship.

His work method, which was brought up to date at his Ely lecture in 1981 before the American Economic Association, is truly revolutionary in its substance and its consequences. By persuading us through his work in the 1930s to distinguish far more carefully than we had done before between our personal value judgments and the conclusions derived from logic and empirical evidence, by forcing us to face up to the difficulties of interpersonal comparisons, and to the fact that they are unavoidable in much of welfare and policy analysis, he led the discipline in directions which made it more powerful and more defensible. For these and many other major contributions his colleagues owe Lionel Robbins an unrepayable debt.

