



February 25, 2022

To the HES Distinguished Fellow Selection Committee:

We are writing to nominate Keith Tribe as a Distinguished Fellow of the History of Economics Society.

Tribe received his Ph.D. from the University of Cambridge in 1977, working under the supervision of Maurice Dobb. Over the next twenty-five years he occupied positions in sociology and economics at Keele University, culminating in his appointment as Reader in Economics from 1995-2002. Over most of the last 20 years, Tribe has been an independent scholar, supporting his research through work as a translator of texts (about which more below), but maintaining a voluminous and highly influential program of research in the history of economics.

Though Tribe has published numerous articles in a vast spectrum of journals and edited collections over the years, his primary influence has come via his books, including (to list just a subset) Land, Labour and Economic Discourse (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), Governing Economy. The Reformation of German Economic Discourse 1750-1840 (Cambridge, 1988), Strategies of Economic Order. German Economics 1750-1950, (Cambridge, 1995), Economic Careers. Economics and Economists in Britain 1930-1970 (Routledge, 1997), The Economy of the Word. Language, History, and Economics (Oxford, 2015), and Constructing Economic Science. The Invention of a Discipline 1850-1950 (Oxford, 2021). What unites all of these volumes is a combination of historiographic innovation and, because of that, a significant reshaping of our understanding of key moments in the history of economics.

Reviewers have consistently praised the depth of his scholarship, the innovative topics, and his clear but subtle analytical stance—all qualities that make him a clear candidate for this honor. He is very much an intellectual historian, but one whose work very much joins up and integrates the humanities and the social sciences. That integration works in several ways. First, he joins sociology with political economy, and both of those with how language matters—not just in the historical primary source writings *within* those fields, but in writings *about* those fields. He then takes this one step further to show to how serious attention to language usages give us insight into how those nascent social scientists understood the real societies/economies of their periods.

Tribe's work is important in *three* domains that exhibit this range. The *first*, which we see most clearly focussed in *Economy of the Word* (2015), is the importance of language, for language is the means by which ideas about the socio-economic-political world are expressed to such an

extent that without understanding the way those commentators have used language, we cannot expect to understand what they were saying. This may sound obvious but it was for a long time buried by other historical fashions. Language was a key point in his first book, titled *Land*, *Labour and Economic Discourse (1978)*, in which the term 'discourse'—then hardly used—had a significance that has now become lost.

Where many historians read earlier writers as engaged in projects that imperfectly anticipated modern social science, Tribe identified a clear divide between those seeing economic and social order as needing to be imposed by the ruler, and those seeing it arising more naturally from human interactions. This provides the *second* theme in his writing. In *Governing Economy* (1988), Tribe turned specifically to Germany, expanding his purview from focus on types of literature to the institutions that sustained the 'science' of Cameralism. The international flow of ideas, and the reception of French Physiocratic ideas and Smith's *Wealth of Nations* into Germany, showed again how important language, and translation, were to local reception of those ideas. This was shortly followed by *Strategies of Economic Order* (1995) a series of essays showing the different ways in which German politico-socio-economics, from the eighteenth century through the National Socialists and postwar Ordo-liberals, had conceived the problem of socio-economic order.

The *third* theme of Tribe's scholarship is his great attention to the working practices of his authors such as Marx and Walras, and the way they used their sources. He used similar skills in looking at Max Weber, clearly a key figure in his studies of German economics. Weber's *Economy and Society* was never finished, and earlier translations into English had treated him as a comparative sociologist (whereas for his contemporaries he was as much an economist), and used this presumption to fill in the gaps in Weber's manuscript with other inserts to create a continuous text. Tribe's new translation preserves the main features of Weber's extraordinary text—including its many different ways of breaking up the material into sub-paragraphs, the 'bolding' of certain words, etc. Then, by extensive interpretive editorial inserts, Tribe explains what Weber was trying to achieve in his writing practices. This translation (which took many years) has the feeling of an archeological reconstruction—an amazing piece of work, far more than simply a translation. It offers completely new insight into Weber's work for English readers and has been hailed by reviewers as an incredibly important contribution to scholarship in its own right.

Tribe's most recent extensive research project is found in his recently published *Constructing Economic Science* (2022), which looks at the history of the economics from the nineteenth into the current period, using a comparative analysis of the UK with American and German experiences. Tribe has long been a commentator on the history of German economics, and this book provides a fundamentally new perspective on the evolution of UK economics, building on an earlier and extensive set of oral interviews (*Economic Careers*, 1997), and a long research investment in tracing student numbers and institutional changes. This remarkable volume challenges one of the central tenets of the historiography of our field: the centrality of Cambridge economics in the development of modern economic science.

In this rich agenda of scholarship, Tribe has, almost as a byline, become a translator of very considerable note—a fact that should come as no surprise given his detailed attention to matters of language and its use. Tribe's some twenty volumes of translation include von Thünen's *The Isolated State* (part III) (Palgrave, 2009), Philippe Steiner's *Emile Durkheim and the Birth of Economic Sociology* (Princeton, 2011), Max Weber's *Economy and Society: A New Translation* (Harvard, 2019), and Oudin-Bastide and Steiner's *Calculation and Morality* (Oxford, 2019), the last of which was honored with the HES's Spengler Prize. Through these translation efforts, Tribe has brought numerous important works in and on the history of the social sciences to the attention of English-language audiences.

Now, in new move, Tribe, as a research fellow at the University of Tartu, is returning his focus to the agrarian issues that occupied him at the start of his career. In the eighteenth century and for some time into the nineteenth, agriculture dominated economic life and hence conceptions of economic order, as the title of his first book makes clear. His returning to these questions will surely result in another impressive monograph based on innovative research. But there is no need to wait on yet another pathbreaking contribution from Tribe to bestow upon him an honor which his contributions to our subject so richly merit. It is difficult to think of a scholar whose work makes him more worthy of the HES Distinguished Fellow Award than Keith Tribe.

Yours sincerely,

Mary S. Morgan

Mary S. Morgan

Albert O. Hirschman Professor of History and Philosophy of Economics Department of Economic History, London School of Economics Distinguished Fellow, History of Economics Society President, History of Economics Society, 2004-2005 Fellow of the British Academy, and Overseas Fellow of the KNAW

Steven G. Medema

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George Family Research Professor of Economics

Associate Director, Center for the History of Political Economy

Duke University

Editor, Journal of the History of Economic Thought, 1998-2008

President, History of Economics Society, 2009-2010



To the Distinguished Fellow Award Committee History of Economics Society

February 22, 2022

Dear members of the committee,

I submit this letter in support of the nomination of Keith Tribe as a Distinguished Fellow of the History of Economics Society.

Keith Tribe has been one of the most distinctive voices in the history of economics and political economy for the better part of five decades. His first published monograph, *Land, Labour and Economic Discourse* (1978), remains to this day a unique and rewarding study in the early history of political economy, tracing an alternative 'origin story' founded on important discontinuities in the use of such elementary economic concepts as land and labor. The book shone a spotlight on the notion of 'economic discourse' as a unit of analysis, in contrast with the standard focus on economic theory – a lead later pursued by scholars like Jack Amariglio and Lars Magnusson. It was also at the forefront of renewed engagements between the history of economics and the philosophy of science, offering a trenchant critique of the frameworks advanced by Thomas Kuhn and Imre Lakatos, and looking for inspiration instead in the French historical epistemology of Gaston Bachelard and Georges Canguilhem.

On a personal note, the book was also my first point of contact with Keith's work, while I was still in the early stages of my PhD research. After reading it, I was deeply impressed by the portrait of an early modern economic discourse where the classical understanding of *oikonomia*, to a very large extent, still ruled the day – a world structured around agriculture, not foreign trade.

Land, Labour and Economic Discourse foreshadowed Keith's lifelong obsession with deconstructing canonical accounts of the history of economics. This often involved careful reexaminations of seminal works in the discipline, their context and critical fate. Adam Smith came in for serious scrutiny in inspired essays such as 'Natural Liberty and Laissez Faire: How Adam Smith Became a Free Trade Ideologue' (1995), 'Adam Smith: Critical Theorist?' (1999), and 'Reading Trade in the Wealth of Nations' (2006). This facet of his work reached a peak with The Economy of the Word (2015), a masterful tour de force in which Keith returned to his notion of economics as a form of language – 'not a method, but a grammar' – to recast the entire history of political economy from Aristotle to Lionel Robbins.

The counterpart to Keith's interest in reexamining the place of canonical figures in the history of economics lay in his efforts to rehabilitate traditions of political economy usually swept aside in orthodox disciplinary narratives. The outstanding example are his numerous expeditions into the field of German-language political economy, starting with the seminal essays 'Cameralism and the Science of Government' (1984) and 'Friedrich List and the Critique of Cosmopolitical Economy' (1988). Keith's studies in the history of political economy in early modern Germany found their most polished expression in *Governing Economy: The Reformation of German Economic Discourse*, 1750-1840 (1988), arguably his



most well-known work. In his later volume *Strategies of Economic Order: German Economic Discourse*, 1750-1950 (2007), Keith expanded his reach to more recent events in the Germanlanguage tradition, such as the late-19th century *Methodenstreit* and the origins of ordoliberalism in the interwar era.

Keith's interest in German political economy serves as an entry point to another of his critical contributions to the history of political economy: his work as a first-rate academic translator. In this respect, it should suffice to mention two invaluable entries in his long record of achievements. The first was his translation of Reinhard Koselleck's seminal *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (1985, later revised in 2004), which introduced English-speaking audiences to one of the founding texts in the historiographical tradition commonly known as the history of concepts (*Begriffsgeschichte*). The second contribution for which Keith will be praised by scholars for generations to come is the recent new translation of Max Weber's *Economy and Society* (2019), complete with critical commentary summarizing three decades of research into Weber's work and his legacy for modern social science.

Finally, Keith has also been a leading player in a field of research that has blossomed since the late 1980s: the institutionalization and professionalization of the economics discipline. One of his earliest contributions in this area was the volume *The Market for Political Economy: The Advent of Economics in British University Culture, 1850-1905* (1993), coedited with Alon Kadish. Since then, Keith has tackled different aspects of this broad problem in essays dedicated to the spread of economic societies in the British Isles, the pedagogical effects of the Cambridge Economics Tripos, and the international networks of German *émigré* economists, among many others. His years of careful and extensive research on the subject have culminated in the recently published monograph *Constructing Economic Science: The Invention of a Discipline, 1850-1950* (2022), in which Keith chronicles the emergence of the modern economics discipline, in Europe and North America, as 'an institutional creation' mediated and legitimized by the modern university.

Five decades into a remarkably prolific career, Keith's stamina and intellectual curiosity seem not to have abated one bit. His most recent incursions into the field of economic history may seem surprising to occasional readers – but a quick glance at his early volume *Genealogies of Capitalism* (1981) should make it clear how they respond to long-standing concerns that have always been at the back of his mind. Throughout the years, Keith Tribe has not only been consistent; he has been consistently excellent. Even if there is no end in sight to his brilliant scholarship, the time is ripe for the History of Economics Society to recognize the indelible mark he has already left in our field.

Sincerely,

Carlos Eduardo Suprinyak Associate Professor of Economics American University of Paris



School of Political Science and International Studies

Associate Professor Ryan Walter School of Political Science and International Studies St Lucia Campus, Brisbane Qld, 4076 AUSTRALIA

24 February 2022

To: To the Distinguished Fellow Award Committee

RE: Keith Tribe

Dear members of the committee,

I submit this letter in support of the nomination of Keith Tribe as a Distinguished Fellow of the History of Economics Society.

Keith Tribe has been producing cutting-edge scholarship for over forty years. And while the history of economic thought has been a focus for his work, to understand the quality and character of his contribution to the discipline it is necessary to appreciate something of his services to scholarship more generally.

A good starting point is Tribe's first monograph, *Land, Labour and Economic Discourse* (1978). It drew on the heady ingredients that were circulating in the British academy of the time: Althusserian Marxism and its rejection of humanist approaches to knowledge, Michel Foucault's explorations of structures underlying discourse in *The Order of Things* (1966), and Thomas Kuhn's study of scientific progress in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962). What is remarkable (and yet standard form for Tribe) is that in this debut text, a quickly reworked version of his PhD thesis, Tribe surpassed all three sources. He did so by adopting a more rigorous method than any of them: using the *Catalogue of the Goldsmiths' Library of Economic Literature* to simply read through the extant source material and note changes in the style and substance of argument over 250 years.

The results enabled Tribe to provide an empirical account of change in economic discourse, beginning not with the mythical creature of "mercantilism" but with a conception of householding or *oikonomia* that writers projected onto the state. *Oikonomia* provided an alternative starting point for the history of economic thought in relation to which Tribe developed new portraits for James Steuart, Adam Smith, and David Ricardo, not painted against a twentieth-century background but their own time. Tribe's account also avoided the need to rely on a prefabricated template of change of the type offered by Kuhn, Althusser, and Foucault because – having read the material – Tribe could instead report what he had found. The stubborn effort involved in this project is illustrative of Tribe's research and

explains why the chapter on husbandry has still not been surpassed: nobody else has taken the trouble.

It is worth noting the diverse field of scholars who have not only benefited from this text but have treated it as providing a detailed account of a terrain that they do not possess the skills to cover themselves: feminist theorists (eg. Carole Pateman), governmentality scholars (eg. Mitchell Dean), historians of science (eg. Stephen Gaukroger), and Marxist theorists (eg. Bob Jessop). In short, in addition to offering a challenge to historians of economic thought by obliging them to ponder if their standard teleology of mercantilism-Smith-Ricardo were not unhistorical, Tribe's text also provided resources that have been drawn on by a broad public of scholars through its obvious quality and importance. While this is entirely typical of Tribe's work it distinguishes him in the history of economic thought.

A similar claim can be made for Tribe's exacting labours as a professional translator. As the list of translations demonstrates, this activity has made available to English audiences texts from a range of genres and periods originally published in French, German, and Italian. To name only one: the recently completed translation of Max Weber's *Economy and Society* (2019) is a landmark in Weber scholarship, undoing 70 years of harm wrought by the flawed translation of Talcott Parsons.

This professional focus has sharpened Tribe's attention to language, which was already present in *Land, Labour and Economic Discourse*, resulting in a programmatic call for historians to study economic thought as language use at the close of *Economy of the Word* (2015). This linguistic focus and the sheer quality of Tribe's work has provided a crucial channel between the history of economic thought and the history of political thought as practised by scholars adopting either "Cambridge school" methods or those of conceptual history of the type associated with Reinhard Koselleck. In other words, Tribe can claim to be one of the field's most successful and important ambassadors to adjacent disciplines.

All of this, I take it, stands as ample evidence of an outstanding and unique contribution. Yet the most recent work, *Constructing Economic Science* (2022), forges yet another innovation. It swims against the tide by treating the history of education as a crucial ingredient for the history of economic thought, thereby expanding the notion of "context" beyond the linguistic to include phenomena as banal as economists' aspirations, promotions, and publishing successes and failures. The results are as startling as those reported in *Land, Labour and Economic Discourse* almost half a century earlier: modern economics was not made by reason but by universities, Alfred Marshall was a flash in the pan, and Lionel Robbins was successful because he converted his mediocrity into an asset. This work is also the product of an implausible amount of toil: 30 years of visiting institutions large and small to access archives, interviewing economists, and researching the history of education systems in Europe and America.

Finally, and to avoid giving the impression of a scholar-monk, Tribe's gregariousness and generosity must be marked. Anyone who has written to him will know that they can not only expect that the reply will be timely but that it will come with interest, in both senses of the word! I first encountered this virtue as a poor doctoral student from Australia when Keith and his wife, Lin, insisted on hosting me. It is the kind of behaviour that I have learned to expect

of a scholar and person whose talent in the first office is matched only by the natural kindness that he dispenses in the latter.

I commend to the committee the nomination of Keith Tribe as a Distinguished Fellow.

Yours Sincerely,

Associate Professor Ryan Walter University of Queensland

KEITH PHILIP TRIBE

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Education:

1960-68	Kingston Grammar School. Surrev
1968-71	University of Essex, School of Social Studies
1972-75	Research Student in Social and Political Sciences, University of Cambridge.

Degrees:

1971	B.A.(Hons.) Sociology
1977	PhD (Cantab.) for thesis "Ground Rent and the Formation of Classical Political Economy: A Theoretical History" supervised by M. H. Dobb

Employment

1976-85	Lecturer in Sociology, Keele University
1985-88	Lecturer in Economics, Keele University
1988-95	Senior Lecturer in Economics, Keele University
1995-2002	Reader in Economics, Keele University
2019-23	Associate Professor in History, University of Tartu

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Publications

1) Books

Land, Labour and Economic Discourse, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London 1978. Genealogies of Capitalism, Macmillan, London 1981.

Marxism and the Agrarian Question (with Athar Hussain), Macmillan, London 1981. Second edition 1983.

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