

SGEME 11: The New Strategy in Economic Education

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Bob Henman has laid out sound general directions in the previous SGEME essay. This is a brief follow-up on the new focus mentioned there so as to encourage a communal effort in regard to that focus. I am drawing attention to the place of that oft-mentioned grade 12 class in economics. It is available in the first chapter of *Sane Economics and Fusionism*, but also in the beginning of chapter 11 of *Bernard Lonergan. His Life and Leading Ideas* (Pierrot Lambert and Philip McShane, Axial Publishing 2010), in *FNC* (Field Nocturnes CanTower) 46, and - in a fuller context of suggestions for grade 12 teachers - in Prehumous 1. There is a much fuller contextualization in Fusion 1: "Economic Reformation: 'This is going to take one hundred and fifty years'" (that quotation is from Lonergan, a remark he made to me the day in Autumn 1977 that we talked about his "total coverage" approach in the following year).

Even those who have neither time nor energy to read through or work at the class can help with the nudging forward ... !you may have a friend in the *Financial Times* or *The Economist!* - could manage such nudging "have you read this shocking exposure of Establishment Economics?". But, of course, a knowing nudging would be better. Nor, indeed, is it difficult to get a beginning on that knowing: the issue is, that selling a loaf of bread and selling a delivery van just don't belong together in a serious economic analysis. Lonergan repeated this in a variety of ways in his writings and in his years of teaching, 1978-83, but it got lost or neglected in the larger picture. Did I help him to lose it at the beginning? I worked with him in the Summer and Autumn of 1977 as he got ready to teach economics for the first time in January 1978, and he knew of the apparent success of my "total coverage" presentations, done twice in the June of that year. I now see the total coverage as a mis-direction. I should have given the group a few grade twelve classes, such as I hinted at, thirty years later, in Prehumous 1: "Teaching High school Economics. A Common-Quest Manifesto".

Bob has drawn my attention to the fact that it is not so simple, although the Australian boys, to whom I presented it, seemed - with the benefit of their economic innocence - to find extremely plausible the view of two flows of money and produce. Might some of us mess around in the eight or so pages of the class, finding its plausibility, talking about it among ourselves and to others?

The big difficulty is that the relevance of the discovery of two flows and their plausibility does not show up till you have ventured further, to find how the two flows oscillate etc. This is something I showed in a reasonably simple fashion in *Economics for Everyone*, - my example there was the invention of the plough in a spade-using culture - but perhaps a discussion led by Bob, shared by others, would get the message into a simpler form. Eventually one gets a grip on, is gripped by, the folly of the standard diagrams of economic activity - especially when viewed dynamically - such as I presented in *Economics for Everyone*, 32, 33. These can be made available during discussions. Helpful too is the diagram towards which Joan Robinson stumbled, following Kalecki, given in *Economics for Everyone* on page 90.

I could go on, but to do so would be to slip into a survey of “total coverage”. But I would note that the “total coverage” problem in economics is a parallel with the problem of *Comparison* [I put that word in italics to recall its italicized occurrence on page 250 of *Method in Theology*] that haunts much of Lonergan studies. What is the point of comparing details of Jones and Lonergan when the basics are opaque to Jones, dodged by Jones?