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978-0-521-83387-5 - The Structure of Post-Keynesian Economics: The Core Contributions of the Pioneers

G. C. Harcourt

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## The Structure of Post-Keynesian Economics

This book is a major contribution to post-Keynesian thought. With studies of the key pioneers – Keynes himself, Kalecki, Kahn, Goodwin, Kaldor, Joan Robinson, Sraffa and Pasinetti – Geoff Harcourt emphasises their positive contributions to theories of distribution, pricing, accumulation, endogenous money and growth. The propositions of earlier chapters are brought together in chapters 6 and 8 in an integrated narrative and interpretation of the major episodes in advanced capitalist economies in the post-war period, leading to a discussion of the relevance of post-Keynesian ideas to both our understanding of economics and to policy-making. (Chapter 7 is concerned with theories of growth from Adam Smith to the present day.) The appendixes include biographical sketches of the pioneers and an analysis of the conceptual core of their discontent with orthodox theories. Drawing on the author's experience of teaching and researching over fifty years, this book will appeal to undergraduate and graduate students interested in alternative approaches to theoretical, applied and policy issues in economics, as well as to teachers and researchers in economics.

G. C. HARCOURT is Emeritus Reader in the History of Economic Theory, University of Cambridge, Emeritus Fellow of Jesus College, Cambridge and Professor Emeritus of the University of Adelaide.

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## Preface and acknowledgements

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While writing this book, I have had in mind two sets of readers: first, undergraduate and graduate students who may be looking for alternative approaches to thinking about theoretical, applied and policy issues in economics. By presenting a structure of the thought (and its origins) that I have found so helpful over my working life I hope to at least interest and possibly even enthuse this first set. Secondly, I also hope that what I have written may interest teachers and researchers in economics, not so much perhaps for the details of the analysis, with which many will be familiar, but for the way in which one person at least sees the interconnections and interrelationships which have emerged as our discipline has evolved and developed.

The ideas in the book themselves have evolved and developed for me over the past fifty years, in both lectures and research. My model is not exactly Dennis Robertson's three volumes of lectures on *Economic Principles* in Cambridge, Robertson (1957, 1958, 1959); but I suppose it has something in common with them, even with his admission that 'if it is all wrong, it can't be helped now' (Robertson 1957, 7). I trust, though, that I have not written in quite as querulous a tone as that into which Robertson sometimes lapsed, for I remain, as ever, a happy and enthusiastic, even optimistic, person who nevertheless is willing to admit that he may be wrong.

I wrote the first draft of this Preface in April 2005, in the fiftieth year since I first came to Cambridge in September 1955. Half my working life has since been spent here (the other half in Adelaide, most happy years) and I count myself most fortunate to have studied and taught in such a stimulating and satisfying, even if sometimes–no, often–so cantankerous an environment.

Much more than this, though, this year Joan and I will celebrate our Golden Wedding anniversary on 30th July. As ever, her love and support have made possible the writing of the book, much of which occurred in the study she imaginatively prepared for me in our New Square home when, having had three years' grace over and above the obligatory



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seventy years' constraint, I no longer had a room at Jesus. I would like to dedicate the volume to her with my love.

I am much indebted to many cohorts of pupils who have listened to my lectures, to my graduate students and colleagues in Adelaide, Cambridge and Toronto and to friends in many countries who have contributed greatly in discussions and their own writings to my understanding of economic issues. I hope I will not cause offence if I thank explicitly the people who have most directly influenced what I have written here: Mauro Baranzini, Stephanie Blankenburg, Wylie Bradford, Giuseppe Fontana, Prue Kerr, Tom Russell, Sean Turnell and the anonymous readers of the manuscript for Cambridge University Press.

Finally, may I thank Rhona Watson for her generous and efficient searches and for answers to my obscure queries, and Susan Cross, Frances Thomson, Frances Flood, Debra Armstrong and Janet Nurse who cheerfully typed the manuscript and never once complained about my atrocious handwriting.

Thanks are also due to Macmillan for the extract from Joan Robinson's *Essays in the Theory of Economic Growth* (1962) reproduced in chapter 3.

GCH

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