

Geoff: A tribute

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I have known Geoff Harcourt personally for more than 40 years; and longer than that through his works. I could certainly speak of Geoff's contributions to the discipline of economics and the influence that he exerted on generations of students who had the fortune to know him. In the happy occasion of his 90th birthday, however, I wish to talk about something different and more general that, for me, is far more important. I want to pay a tribute to Geoff's fairness and open-mindedness in doing and teaching economics.

The most important thing that Geoff taught me first as a student, then as a colleague, a friend and relative is that one should approach research and confrontation with other ideas and points of view by respecting them and, most all, the people who believe in them, even though they are very far from our own stand. All know Geoff's firm and convinced commitment to Keynesian and Post Keynesian economics and his defense of such approaches from criticisms as well as his attempt to provide their development. Geoff's convinced engagement, however, has never meant his loss of fairness and kindness towards everybody, particularly those who had different views. He defends his ideas and opinions with arguments and rational reasoning, in the hope of convincing the others that he is right but being also ready to accept valid objections and criticisms.

Also, with students—I can speak from personal experience—Geoff has never imposed his views in a dogmatic and authoritarian way. Quite to the contrary, he has always invited students to develop their own ideas and to look around for good ideas, wherever they come from, even from sources far from the student's immediate interests as well as political and ideological views. It is in this way that students and all our ideas and views can acquire more strength, as they are not the outcome of intellectual insulation but are the fruit of critical discussions and the effort to come to terms with those who do not share our positions.

Our ideas can prove their strength only through discussion and confrontation with our interlocutors. People, or schools of thought, with different ideas from ours are not the 'enemy' to defeat, or to ignore altogether, but subjects with views that ought to be known and to be critically discussed. The hope is that listening to others can bring about a better comprehension of what you are discussing thanks to our as well others' contributions. Geoff, I believe has always followed this path.

Geoff's contributions to economics are there and many can benefit from them, but I think that his kind open-minded way to approach discussions and criticisms is equally, if not more, important; especially in the current academic and, more generally, social environment in which extreme 'tribalism' and the obsessive affirmation of one's identity is taking the upper hand by preventing the confrontation of different views and so, I believe, the possible development of our knowledge.