

An Interview with Philip McShane
Author of *Economics for Everyone: Das Jus Kapital*
February 27, 2017

Q: What originally inspired you to write *Economics for Everyone* in 1996?

PM: In 1968 I was nudged by the Canadian thinker, Bernard Lonergan (1904–1984) to read his work of 1930–44 in economics, and indeed, to seek out an economist for him. He had failed to find a serious reader in the mid-forties and filed away his work. In 1977 I had the opportunity to present his 1944 view twice, and it was successfully received, although the audience contained no economist. That Autumn Lonergan and I planned for his presentation of his work, something he did for five years, but again without any audience in the profession. I continued my efforts of presentation round the world and, of course, searching for sympathetic economist, with little or no success. My last lecture, a few years ago, was typical of an entrenched attitude. A professor in the audience of my lecture to the economics department of Seoul University said that “it is all in Mankiw.” What is in Mankiw—criticized in a book written with colleague Bruce Anderson *Beyond Establishment Economics: No Thank You, Mankiw*—is the usual single-flow analysis that has been the economic diet or poison of economic activity for some hundreds of years. The poison is boosted by the idiocy of considering exchanging of property—businesses, stocks, etc.; and in recent decades commodity money wound round various gambling formulae—as the test of economic well-being.

Q: What is the scope, aim, and approach of this book?

PM: The central aim of the book is to get people to notice that the one-flow analysis in economics leads not just to nowhere but to regular disasters, global and local, in financing and feeding and fun. The gambling mentioned in the previous answer adds considerably to the sick mess: common knowledge now, but on it goes. The emergence of a science of economics instead of number-laced present voodoo will slowly lift local and global economic activities to sanity and well-being. The book is far from an easy read, but the first two chapters should bring a serious reader to the startling conviction that we have been trapped in an alchemy of money for centuries. The new Preface to the book adds a key simple exercise that can get the reader right into the ball-park of the new economics.

Q: What do you hope the reader takes away from *Economics for Everyone*?

PM: I would hope that the reader would take away, carry off into popular discourse or even serious journalism, the hilarious light that the B. A. degree in economics is just clap-trap. It claps the so-called learned economists that teach them and advise governments and businesses; it traps us all in a destructive tunnel of thinking that keeps the poor nicely poor and badly nourished. Obviously, I would like such readers to clap or trap the learned economists elsewhere—in retirement, in jail, on the arse?

Q: How has your perspective on economics changed in the last twenty plus years?

PM: My perspective on the needed science of economics has evolved towards a better grip on the local and global empirical requirements for better control, fewer glitches, a steady focus on global well-being. Some light on these advances are given in chapters seven and eight of the recent book *Profit: The Stupid View of President Donald Trump*. But, of course, that light is not shared, nor is it of interest to present professional economists. I am not alone in criticizing their offerings either on the level of undergraduate degrees or on the level of political advice, but such criticism as a rule misses the point of the shockingly elementary mistake in the present voodoo economics. Perhaps, however, the largest shift in my perspective relates to the settled arrogant obtuseness of the economic profession and its political lackeys or victims. Now I can settle for the pessimism of seeing it as a core feature of the negative Anthropocene Age. The positive Anthropocene age pivots on the emergence of the science of economics to which I point. Might it be a few thousand years in the future?

Q: What is the relationship of *Economics for Everyone* (1996) to *Profit: The Stupid View of President Donald Trump* (2016)?

PM: The more recent book adds light on my advances in thinking out the empirical style of the new economics. Chapter seven, for instance, parallels global economic analysis with the modest efforts of global hydrodynamics. Secondly, the drive of the book is towards locating a meaning of profit that is both empirical and normative and not just a vague axiom of business as usual. Thirdly, I emphasize there, especially, in chapter two, a precise entry point to the new science: it is an entry-point that can be comprehended by the non-economist willing to put a little effort into finding that it is an obvious unavoidable characteristic of daily economic behavior. Thus it becomes a weapon in the battle against the arrogant and destructive fixity of the one-flow thinking of present economics, a flow

at the mercy of a dominant ethos that treats money as a commodity and property-exchange fluctuations as seriously symbolic of economic health and progress. Of course, there are other aspects of the book on *Profit*, such as the disgusting behavior of the 1% in its exercise of power.