



# TENTH EAST-WEST PHILOSOPHERS' CONFERENCE

UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII' I ♦ 2530 Dole Street ♦ Honolulu, Hawaii' i 96822-2383

Phone: (808) 956-8859 ♦ E-mail: EWPC2011@hawaii.edu

www.hawaii.edu/phil/

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*University of Hawaii' i  
at Mānoa*

**PETER D. HERSHOCK**  
*East-West Center*

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## **CALL FOR PAPERS**

**VALUE AND VALUES: ECONOMICS AND JUSTICE  
IN AN AGE OF GLOBAL INTERDEPENDENCE**

**TENTH EAST-WEST PHILOSOPHERS' CONFERENCE  
UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII' I ♦ EAST-WEST CENTER  
MAY 16-24, 2011**

**DEADLINE: DECEMBER 15, 2010**

The Tenth East-West Philosophers' Conference will bring together philosophers from different cultures and with different perspectives to reflect upon a productive and sustainable relationship between economics and ethics. What is the appropriate relationship between worth (value) and what is worthwhile (values), between seeking a shared human prosperity and our different visions of what constitutes a moral life? The theme of the conference will begin a conversation that anticipates Hawaii' i as host to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Leaders Meeting scheduled for November 2011, a high-level international gathering that is expected to attract over 10,000 participants from the Asia-Pacific region to Hawaii' i, including leaders from 21 APEC economies, senior government officials, business leaders, international economists, Asia-Pacific experts, and worldwide media. What can a meeting of world philosophers contribute as a precursor of this important international event?

Contemporary global dynamics, especially in the aftermath of what is now being called the Great Recession, bring into question with some urgency the divorce of economics from ethics and what Karl Polanyi has cautioned against as the "disembedding" of markets from broader social, cultural and political systems. Indeed, the kinds of issues we are now facing—climate change perhaps most prominent among them—also make evident our entry into an era of truly global predicaments that require resolutely coordinated responses across value systems. Thus, the present moment is one in which it is globally opportune to engage in intercultural considerations of the appropriate relationship between economics and ethics: between the goal of maximizing human prosperity and justly enhancing the quality of our lives as persons and as culturally distinctive communities.

The current tendency to view economics and ethics as entirely separate fields is historically recent. From antiquity through at least the eighteenth century, the domains of economics and ethics were in many if not most cultures understood to be coterminous and mutually entailing. There are assertions in early Buddhist texts, for example, that poverty alleviation is a prerequisite for the successful cultivation of wisdom, attentive mastery and moral clarity, and the expression of such wisdom as a kind of responsive virtuosity. In Islamic societies, it traditionally

has been assumed that a single set of principles will govern human action from the marketplace to the mosque. And in Confucian cultures, the right to rule enshrined in the celestial mandate was understood as a divine response to the personal propriety of those in power that has led to social prosperity.

In the West, until the time of Adam Smith in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, ethics and economics were most commonly understood as closely allied projects considering how best to organize society. Smith himself, while best remembered for arguing on behalf of the superiority of competitive free markets, based his argument on explicitly historical and moral grounds, and was deeply concerned with issues of poverty alleviation and the advancement of society as a whole. It was only subsequently, in the context of the scientific and industrial revolutions of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that economists like David Ricardo shifted emphasis from moral considerations to mathematical methods, envisioning economics as science, while ethics itself was given a similarly quantitative reading in Mill's utilitarianism.

A consideration of the appropriate relation between economics and justice is complex. Over especially the last quarter century, ethics has entered the economic sphere primarily in a consideration of the relationship between economic growth and equity. In this context, equity is understood largely as a function of the degree to which individuals (persons, genders, ethnic groups, and so on) enjoy equality of opportunity, thereby linking equity with freedom of choice. Again, in global historical terms, this universal appeal is quite recent. Aristotle, by contrast, characterized equity as a positive corrective to the effects of strictly applied laws and principles which fail to bring about justice precisely because of their universality, thereby linking equity with qualitative considerations of particularity and difference in the pursuit of justice. Such a view may call into question any and all "one size fits all" approaches to revitalizing the conversation between economics and ethics, and recommends instead comparative perspectives that can activate cultural differences as the basis of mutual contribution to a shared human flourishing.

We are inviting philosophers to propose a paper or a panel that will address themes relevant to such general topics as:

- Economics and equity
- The tensions between human and economic rights
- The moral imperatives for "greening" economics, and their costs
- Corruption as a "fact" of real-world economics
- The ethical and economic issues surrounding health care
- The ethical implications of care work/caring labor
- The morality of financial instruments and systems
- The relationship among education, equity and economic growth
- The question of limits to free market capitalism
- The links between global agribusiness and systemic inequalities
- Evaluating the technological engines of economic growth
- The ethical implications of aging societies
- Alternative models of social well being and economic activity

A short abstract can be sent to the organizing committee by email attachment to EWPC2011@hawaii.edu. As in past, we will be preparing a volume with selected papers to remember the conference. We anticipate that this forthcoming conference like the previous nine will be an historical event. We look forward to welcoming you to the Islands.

Roger T. Ames and Peter D. Hershock, Co-Directors

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