

Economics and Human Flourishing: (What) Can Economists Learn from Theology?

LEUVEN
JUNE 30 AND
JULY 1, 2023

CALL FOR PAPERS

How does economics contribute to human flourishing? This ever-relevant question gains new pertinence in the context of the increasing pace of industrial change, technological progress, environmental degradation, poverty and inequality. It is clear that economic policy choices frame our external choice environment, but insofar as the neoliberal vision of *homo economicus* captivates us, our internal sense of self, personhood, and flourishing may be transformed.

ILSE

On June 30-July 1, 2023, the Economic Humanist Group, together with the Institute of Leadership and Social Ethics (ILSE, a research institute of the Evangelische Theologische Faculteit Leuven, Belgium) will organize an international, academic conference, addressing this theme, focusing on the dialogue between the disciplines of economics, philosophy, and Christian theology. The conference will provide an opportunity to engage with and learn from a diverse group of global leading thinkers in these, and other, disciplines. Motivated by a widely documented anthropological poverty (or ignorance) of human nature in economics, the idea underlying the conference can be summarised along four principles:

- 1) Economics is important for human flourishing.
- 2) Christian theology contains relevant knowledge about humans and what is of value.
- 3) These anthropological insights and resources inform and shape the questions that should be answered by new economic models.
- 4) The models may themselves ask questions back to theology and its related disciplines.

This conference offers engaging plenary lectures, and two parallel workshop tracks. Track A addresses the potential shared anthropological ground between economics and theology, inviting contributions from disciplines such as theology, anthropology, philosophy (e.g. personalism), and history of ideas. Track B is specifically designed for scholars trained in the (formal) language of economic models. It asks how insights from other disciplines with a richer understanding of anthropology, such as theology, can feed in ideas to economists, whilst allowing them to

treat those insights within the 'epistemic culture' of economics, based to a considerable degree on mathematical modelling. Through the keynote lectures, insights from both tracks will be integrated into a larger debate.

Keynote Speakers



Gordon Menzies, D.Phil. (University of Oxford, 2001), is Associate Professor of Economics at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS), Australia. From 1986 until 2003, he was an economist at the Reserve Bank of Australia, and in the mid-1990s he was seconded to the Australian Federal

Treasury as an economic modelling consultant. He joined the Faculty of UTS in 2003. His work has focused on the possible dangers of economic thinking, either when it ignores the human side to economic interactions, or when markets become an over-riding metaphor for all social life. An example of this is his book *Western Fundamentalism: Democracy, Sex and the Liberation of Mankind* (2021), which explores the dangers of neoliberalism, and interprets the sexual revolution as a form of right-wing 'deregulation'. He took up the Deputy Directorship of the UTS Paul Woolley Centre for Capital Market Dysfunctionality until 2016. Later that year, he was invited as a visiting scholar at the Oxford Martin School funded by the Institute for New Economic Thinking to work on the necessity of trust in core economic functions like banking.



Masao Ogaki, Ph.D. (University of Chicago, 1988), Professor, Faculty of Economics, Keio University. Masao Ogaki joined the Keio University faculty in 2009. He had previously taught at University of Rochester and Ohio State University. His research areas have been macroeconomic,

econometrics, and international economics with his recent major research interests lie in the areas of behavioral economics. Currently, Ogaki's research includes economics of the community mechanism (by which at least one person proposes voluntary cooperation, and the proposal is not rejected) that complements the works of the market and public sectors. One important area of this research is that on worldviews (such as values and ethical views), which includes both research in positive economics on how worldviews affect economic behaviors (especially altruistic and leadership behaviors) and research in normative economics on introducing virtue ethics into economics.



Ellen Van Stichel, Ph.D. (Catholic University Leuven, 2010), is Assistant Professor of Christian Social and Political Ethics at the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies of the KU Leuven (Belgium). In 2010 she obtained her doctorate in Theology with a dissertation entitled "Out of

Love for Justice: Moral Philosophy and Catholic Social Thought on Global Duties." In 2012, this dissertation was awarded the five-yearly Mgr. Arthur Janssen Prize for Christian Ethics. Her research focuses on the question how theology can contribute to social issues. Themes such as (global) inequality, poverty and social exclusion are investigated from the perspective of Christian social thought and the question of human flourishing. She recently published "Change Request for the Economy: The Economy of Communion as an Example," in *Post-Corona Economy: Can We Learn from the Religious Sector?*, ed. H. Geybels (VUB Press, 2022).

Abstracts

Scholars are invited to submit an abstract for a paper. Abstracts should be maximum 500 words and fall within the theme of the conference as described above. Please indicate which track to be considered for:

A) Considerations on shared ground in anthropology,
B) Human Flourishing in the language of economic models. Each abstract will be assessed blindly by two experts. Abstracts are to be submitted by email to Dr. Steven van den Heuvel, at info@etf-ilse.org.

Please attach two separate Word documents to your email:

- **Document 1:** Your paper proposal, include key bibliographic sources consulted (max. 5). In this document, all references identifying the author should be removed.
- **Document 2:** Your last name, first name, email address, institutional address, the title of your abstract, as well as a short CV (maximum 1 page).

Deadline: **January 31, 2023.**

You can expect to receive a response by **February 28, 2023** at the latest.

Date & Location

The conference will be held on **June 30 and July 1, 2023**, at the Leuven Center of Christian Studies, part of the Evangelische Theologische Faculteit, Leuven. The address is: Sint-Jansbergsesteenweg 97, 3001 Leuven, Belgium.

Registration information will be available soon on the website: etf-ilse.org.

Publication

A volume in the academic peer-reviewed series *Christian Perspectives on Leadership and Social Ethics* (Peeters Publishers) will be dedicated to the publication of selected papers.