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## Foreword

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**Biographical notes:** Jack Reardon is a Professor at the School of Business at Hamline University. He is an Adjunct Professor at the University of Science and Technology of China in Hefei, China and Visiting Professor at Dr. Gaur Hari Singhania Institute of Management and Research, Kanpur, India. He also lectures frequently at Beijing Institute of Technology, Mansfield College (Oxford), and Visva-Bharati University in Santinikentan, India. His research interests include energy and the environment, economic education and labour economics. His most recent book, *The Handbook of Pluralist Economics Education*, was published by Routledge in 2009.

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This issue opens with a short article by James K. Boyce, Gerald Epstein, Juliet Schor and Douglas K. Smith on behalf of Econ4, a new organisation dedicated to constructing an innovative economics and economics education “that recognizes the need to safeguard the Earth for our children and future generations”. We welcome their contribution and look forward to working with Econ4 in reshaping economics.

The *IJPEE* occasionally publishes lectures by prominent scholars advocating and promoting pluralism. In Vol. 2(2), we published Irene van Staveren’s Inaugural Lecture upon acceptance of the Endowed Chair of Pluralist Development Economics at the International Institute of Social Studies, Erasmus University, Rotterdam. In this issue of the *IJPEE*, we are pleased to publish Janice Peterson’s address, ‘Teaching economics in a time and place of economic distress: the value of a pluralistic approach’, presented at the International Confederation of Associations for Pluralism in Economics, Third Triennial Research Conference at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, November 12, 2011. Janice is familiar to readers of the *IJPEE* and is currently serving as president of the Association for Evolutionary Economics.

In today’s constricting budget situation at many universities, Peterson argues we can still do pluralism by focusing on student engagement and service learning. To improve economics education we should focus on “*who* we teach – as well as the questions of *what* and *how* we teach – to engage and serve a diverse group of students in our courses”.

Hendrik Van den Berg in his paper, ‘A sociological case for pluralism in economics’, utilises the writings of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu to argue that culture – the set of common patterns of human activity in a society and the symbolic structures that people value and identify themselves with – blinded neoclassical economists to the possibility of the crisis; and culture has prevented holistic and effective solutions from being implemented. Needless to say, to move economics forward we must change the culture of economics.

Claudia Wiepcke's article 'Gender-specific job choices – implications for career education as part of economic education', discusses a key facet rife in many labour markets: labour market discrimination and gender specific occupations. Although focused on Germany, she argues that pluralist economics can help elucidate the causes and even attenuate this discrimination. Specifically, 'learning standards should reveal the background of economic theories and thus of prevalent gender-specific stereotypes and create a critical awareness for the judging of these theories and stereotypes.'

Marc Pilkington in his article 'The sovereign debt crisis – a transdisciplinary approach' asks that given that "economists have been on the wrong track for too long [is] the present sovereign debt over-heating throughout the world, nothing else than the paroxysm of the severe crisis of a discipline, which has become indifferent to others, even autistic for some, as it is increasingly characterised by scientific instrumentalism, which makes no concession and merely discards interdisciplinary dialogue?"

I agree and also concur that in order to move forward we need a transdisciplinary approach to "transcend the institutional, ideological and methodological boundaries, resulting in a refusal to contemplate the world through the lenses of a rigid compartmentalization of existing disciplines". In the space of a few pages, Pilkington interweaves such diverse subjects as ethics, logic, statistics, psychology, geopolitics, rhetoric, economics, statistics and accounting in order to understand the present sovereign debt crisis. His approach reveals the "prejudicial nature of an over-rigid compartmentalization of knowledge, in particular that which is centered on economics alone".

Victor Claar and Jane Finn in their paper 'Using prior knowledge, scaffolding and modelling to teach lessons in economics: three examples from across the curriculum' utilise the concepts of prior knowledge, scaffolding and modelling in order to make several concepts in economics – the Solow growth model, payoff matrices and linear regression – resonate with students. The authors hope that readers will "use our discussion and examples to create their own fresh approaches to what might otherwise seem like stale, complicated economic ideas".

David Berg and James Hagen in their article, 'Experiential pluralism: gains from short-term study abroad programmes in the business curriculum' advocate short-term study abroad trips for business majors in order to pluralise the business curriculum; in addition, they provide an excellent literature review of the topic.

This issue of the *IJPEE* offers a new series, 'Challenging economic icons', in which we will examine the many cherished icons of the profession, such as scarcity, the invisible hand, exploitation, the Newtonian metaphor, etc. We begin this series with Ian Fletcher's critique of David Ricardo's theory of comparative advantage.

We hope these articles will further the reconceptualisation of economics and economics education. We welcome feedback as well as contributions from any ideological perspective.

With the publication of the fourth issue of Volume 2, I thank all of you who have made the *IJPEE* a success.