

Professor James J Heckman

Doctor of Social Sciences *honoris causa*

Citation

Prof James J Heckman is the Henry Schultz Distinguished Service Professor of Economics at the University of Chicago. A world authority in the economics of human development, he is a scientist, economist, and above all, a humanist who is devoted to serving humanity with hard knowledge and first rate research skills.

He won the John Bates Clark Medal in 1983 and the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences in 2000. These are on top of numerous notable awards and honors from all over the world which were piled on him for his contributions to the education and development of children and public policy, for his groundbreaking contributions in econometrics, and for his renowned achievements in labour economics.

Most befitting to Lingnan University, Prof James J Heckman is a fervent believer in liberal arts education and a practitioner of free and independent thinking. Raised in a fundamentalist Christian family and born in 1944 of humble parentage—neither parent having completed a university degree, Heckman became a “child minister” at eight and had cherished the dream of serving as a church minister as a life goal. However, as the young Heckman grew up, he began to raise many questions. When no one was able to answer these questions to his satisfaction, he made a daring decision: without denying the possible existence of God, he broke away from fundamentalist Christianity altogether. This decision was not at all easy, as it literally isolated him from his family and friends. He had to learn to live off his own intellectual and emotional resources. Moreover, his estrangement with his family meant that he also had to be financially independent at a young age.

The young Heckman gained his financial independence through a generous Boettcher Foundation scholarship at the age of 17. The scholarship required that he attended college in Colorado. In the end, he chose Colorado College, which offered a liberal arts environment and exposed him to anthropology, philosophy, English literature, political science and economics. He edited a student paper, protested civil rights abuses, fought anti-Semitism and anti-black restrictive policies in America, and took a trip through the segregated South with his Nigerian roommate, witnessing racial discrimination in practice and experiencing confrontational situations in Birmingham, Alabama and Hattiesburg, Mississippi. He also became acquainted with the organisers of the Freedom School, a libertarian organisation near Colorado College and learned about the works of renowned economists, liberal theorists, writers and philosophers past and present including Friedrich Hayek, Frédéric Bastiat, Ayn Rand and Milton Friedman. During college days, the young Heckman took advantage of any opportunity to deepen his intellectual development, and broaden his knowledge and experience.

Although he graduated Summa Cum Laude in Mathematics from Colorado College, through his economics professor, he had acquired a keen interest in economics, and particularly economic development. He treasured very much the book that his professor loaned him, *Foundations of Economic Analysis* by Paul Samuelson, which became his keepsake to this day.

After college, Heckman briefly attended the University of Chicago, and then transferred to Princeton University. As much as he liked and respected Milton Friedman personally, as a liberal arts graduate he did not enjoy the rather impersonal Chicago environment. At Princeton, he gradually shifted his interest from development economics to labour economics, benefiting from the likes of Al Rees and Orley Ashenfelter. At the time, there was an ongoing large scale empirical project on labour supply, and other projects on labour market models. These empirical and policy-

oriented projects were a major source of stimulation to Prof Heckman's intellectual development. Prof Heckman also benefited greatly from the highly interactive econometrics group. He acquired a passion in applying economic theory and econometric methods to solve policy problems.

Prof Heckman took up his first academic job at Columbia in 1970 as a labour economist. He thoroughly enjoyed the intellectual environment there and Columbia's daily lunch gatherings that offered intense discussions on wide ranging topics. In 1973 he moved to the University of Chicago, and has stayed there since then. He currently directs the Economics Research Center, the Center for the Economics of Human Development, and the Center for Social Program Evaluation at the Harris School of Public Policy. He is a professor of law at the University of Chicago School of Law, senior research fellow at the American Bar Foundation, and research fellow at the Institute for Fiscal Studies.

What distinguishes Prof Heckman from most other economists is his propensity to work with experts in other fields. Prof Heckman has conducted groundbreaking work with a consortium of economists, developmental psychologists, sociologists, statisticians and neuroscientists. His team empirically demonstrated that quality early childhood development heavily influences health, economic and social outcomes for individuals and society at large, so investing in early childhood development really pays off for society. This work has been published in the top science journal *Science*.

Prof Heckman's work has been devoted to developing a scientific approach to economic policy evaluation, with special emphasis on models of individuals and disaggregated groups. In the early 1990s, his pioneering research of those who obtained the General Education Development certificate received national attention. His research, which showed great deficiencies in the assumed value of the certificate, spurred wide debates across the country.

His recent research focuses on human development and lifecycle skill formation, with a special emphasis on the economics of early childhood development. His research has given policymakers important new insights into such areas as education, job-training programs, minimum-wage legislation, anti-discrimination law, social supports and civil rights.

Prof Heckman is currently coeditor of the *Journal of Political Economy*. He is also a member of the National Academy of Sciences, the Econometric Society, the Society of Labor Economics and the American Statistical Association, a fellow of the American Academy of Art and Sciences, and the American Philosophical Society.

Prof Heckman and his sociologist wife Lynne Pettler have been happily married since 1979. The couple has two talented children: Jonathan, an aspiring mathematician, and Alma, an aspiring actress. Prof Heckman loves nature, and enjoys a hike in the mountains whenever he can find the time.

Mr Chairman, for his remarkable contributions to the economics profession and to the global community, may I present Prof James Heckman to you for conferment of the degree of Doctor of Social Sciences *honoris causa*.

English citation written and delivered by Professor Ho Lok-sang

詹姆斯·約瑟夫·赫克曼教授

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贊辭

詹姆斯·約瑟夫·赫克曼教授為美國芝加哥大學亨利舒茲傑出經濟學教授。他堪稱人類發展經濟學的世界權威，集科學家與經濟學家於一身，致力以知識與卓越研究為世人作出貢獻。

赫克曼教授於1983年獲頒約翰·貝茨·克拉克獎，並於2000年獲頒諾貝爾經濟學獎。除此之外，赫克曼教授對兒童教育及發展與公共政策亦貢獻良多；其在計量經濟學方面的創見以及勞動力經濟學方面的傑出成就，同樣享譽國際並獲獎無數。

赫克曼教授對博雅教育有高度評價，鼓勵獨立自主的思考方式，與嶺大的宗旨不謀而合。他於1944年生於基督教的家庭，早年跟雙親信奉基要派基督教，父母都沒唸大學。八歲時，他成為了兒童事工牧師，並立志成為教會牧師。然而，隨着年紀漸長，他對宗教產生不少疑問；雖不致否定神的存在，但既然他滿腹疑團，就乾脆脫離了基要派基督教。當他作出這個艱難決定的同時，也給家人和朋友孤立起來了，需要學習依靠自己的知識和堅強意志過活。年輕的他就此自力更生，過著獨立的生活。

年僅十七歲的赫克曼，其後獲得貝契爾基金會的獎學金，生計問題也就解決了。根據獎學金的要求，他得在科羅拉多州升學，最後他選擇了科羅拉多學院，得以在博雅教育的環境中涉獵人類學、哲學、英國文學、政治學和經濟學等各個範疇。他擔任學生報編輯時，不但對侵犯公民權利的事情提出抗議，而且就美國本土的反猶太主義和反黑人的限制性政策，奮力作出抗爭。他與尼日利亞室友到實施種族隔離的美國南部遊歷，還親證種族歧視的弊害。他更參與了阿拉巴馬州伯明翰市和密西西比州哈蒂斯堡市的衝突事件。後來，他結識了「自由學館」（科羅拉多學院附近一個自由派組織）的主事人，由此接觸到不同年代人文科學學術思潮及代表人物，例如弗里德里希·海耶克、弗雷德里克·巴斯夏、艾茵·蘭德與米爾頓·佛利民。可見，赫克曼在大學時期已努力不懈把握機會，拓闊知識和豐富自己的閱歷。

赫克曼教授在科羅拉多學院以最優異的成績修畢數學學位，但在經濟學教授的薰陶下，他對經濟學尤其是經濟發展也產生了濃厚的興趣。他十分愛惜教授給他的書—保羅·森穆遜所著的《經濟分析基礎》，並珍藏至今。

完成大學課程後，赫克曼教授曾短暫負笈美國芝加哥大學，後來轉至普林斯頓大學。儘管赫克曼教授個人很喜歡和敬仰佛利民，但基於他是博雅學府的畢業生，不太喜歡稍欠人情味的芝加哥社區。在普林斯頓大學期間，他的興趣逐漸由發展經濟學轉向勞動力經濟學，受到Al Rees及Orley Ashenfelter等學者啟蒙。當時校內除了一項關於勞動力供求的大型研究在進行之外，還有多項有關勞動力市場理論的研究，這些以數據實證及政策為本的項目，啟發了赫克曼教授的學術研究。此外，計量經濟學研究群組高度互動，也讓赫克曼教授獲益不少，令他日後醉心於以經濟理論和計量經濟學來解決政策問題。

1970年，赫克曼教授於美國哥倫比亞大學開展其教學生涯，主力研究勞動力經濟學。哥大的學術環境及每天午餐時對廣泛議題的激烈討論，令他甚為嚮往。及至1973年，他轉職至芝加哥大學，一直服務至今。他現時主理哈里斯公共政策學院的經濟研究中心、人類發展經濟學中心及社

會項目評估中心，並為法學院法學教授、美國律師基金會高級研究員，以及財政研究所研究員。

赫克曼教授與一般經濟學家最顯著的分別，在於他擅於與其他領域的專家合作。他曾與經濟學家、發展心理學家、社會學家、統計學家及神經科學家合作，進行嶄新的研究。其團隊以數據證明優質的兒童早期發展對個人以至整個社會的健康、經濟及人際各方面均影響深遠。因此，於兒童早期發展上投資，對社會是積極和重要的。有關研究結果曾在頂尖科學期刊《科學》發表。

赫克曼教授致力為經濟政策設定科學的評估方法，當中特別針對個人與個別群體的經濟政策的理論研究。一九九零年代初，他率先研究學生取得通識教育發展證書後的表現，獲得全國關注。研究結果顯示，該學歷聲稱的價值與其實質的價值存在重大落差，引起國內熱烈的討論。

他最近集中研究人類發展及生命週期技能的形成，尤其着重兒童早期發展的經濟學。有關研究在教育、職業培訓項目、最低工資立法、反歧視法、社會支援及公民權利方面，為施政者帶來重要啟示。

赫克曼教授現為《政治經濟學期刊》的聯合編輯，並為美國國家科學院、世界計量經濟學會、勞動力經濟學會及美國統計協會成員，以及美國文藝及科學院和美國哲學會院士。

赫克曼教授於1979年與社會學家Lynne Pettler共諧連理，一直生活美滿，而兩名子女亦各具才幹。兒子Jonathan是很有潛質的數學家；女兒Alma，是新進演員。此外，赫克曼教授熱愛大自然，每遇閒暇總愛到山上遠足。

主席先生，為表揚赫克曼教授對經濟學界及全球作出的卓著貢獻，本人恭請閣下頒授榮譽社會科學博士學位予赫克曼教授。

英文贊辭由何灝生教授撰寫及宣讀