



Economic Methodology: A Historical Introduction (Economics as Social Theory)

Harro Maas

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Ever since the inception of economics over two hundred years ago, the tools at the discipline's disposal have grown more and more more sophisticated. This book provides a historical introduction to the methodology of economics through the eyes of economists.

The story begins with John Stuart Mill's seminal essay from 1836 on the definition and method of political economy, which is then followed by an examination of how the actual practices of economists changed over time to such an extent that they not only altered their methods of enquiry, but also their self-perception as economists. Beginning as intellectuals and journalists operating to a large extent in the public sphere, they then transformed into experts who developed their tools of research increasingly behind the scenes. No longer did they try to influence policy agendas through public discourse; rather they targeted policymakers directly and with instruments that showed them as independent and objective policy advisors, the tools of the trade changing all the while.

In order to shed light on this evolution of economic methodology, this book takes carefully selected snapshots from the discipline's history. It tracks the process of development through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, analysing the growth of empirical and mathematical modelling. It also looks at the emergence of the experiment in economics, in addition to the similarities and differences between modelling and experimentation.

This book will be relevant reading for students and academics in the fields of economic methodology, history of economics, and history and philosophy of the social sciences.

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