

Title

"Ethics and Economics: the Significance of One's Image of Science"

Abstract

In this lecture, I explore the historical and philosophical roots of attempts at distinguishing between scientific economics and normative inquiry. I will focus on the period between 1870-1960. I will argue that the modern conception of scientific economics was designed to promote a policy-relevant discipline that (i) could offer consensus-backed prescriptions and that (ii) could carve out an esoteric area of technical expertise in which certain objections need not be answered. This relied on philosophical conceptions of what counts as science (that is, an Image of Science) that valued unanimity and puzzle-solving.

The lecture will not presuppose any background knowledge in economics or philosophy; it is aimed at stimulating discussion about contemporary claims to expertise.