

**The “solitude of the reformist”
Public Policy and Value Judgments
in the Work of Federico Caffè**

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Abstract

Caffè’s pursuit of a more humane society is strictly related to his view of the economy as a human construction within a more encompassing historical process. Based on this view, he conceives of economics as a policy-oriented social science where value judgments play a crucial role. They frame the questions that need to be answered in order to carry out purposeful change. They also structure the analysis, thus the way questions are answered. A commonly shared understanding of the economy is, therefore, unlikely. Although this would seem to undermine Caffè’s view that a “reasonable core” in economic thought exists, the paper – based on methodological premises that differ, to some extent, from those of Caffè - contends that disciplinary dialogue remains possible provided economists acknowledge the need to make their methodological value judgments explicit.

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