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Why Does Jean-Baptiste Say Think Economics is Worth Studying?

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Abstract

Jean-Baptiste Say sought to make the subject of political economy known to a wide public and taught it right up to the last few weeks of his life. The object of this article is to understand why, according to Say, political economy is worth studying. It is worthwhile, because as he explains from 1800 onwards, it is capable of making men more virtuous and societies more civilised. In order to do this, it must establish irrefutable truths. According to him this is possible thanks to use of the experimental method which in political economy enables the establishment of laws as sound as those that exist in the field of physics. Once they are known, these laws help individuals to act according to their true interests, enabling them to improve their material conditions. The material affluence favoured by the knowledge of political economy contributes to men's fulfilment and makes nations more civilised.

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