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## Against Mechanism: Protecting Economics from Science (Sunny Series in Philosophy and Biology)

*Philip Mirowski*

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### AGAINST MECHANISM

*Protecting Economics  
from Science*

PHILIP MIROWSKI  
*Tufts University*

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**Philip Mirowski : Against Mechanism: Protecting Economics from Science (Sunny Series in Philosophy and Biology)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Against Mechanism: Protecting Economics from Science (Sunny Series in Philosophy and Biology):

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. the origins of Neoclassical Economics as fraudulent on scientific grounds then pillories the dismal science as equally useless tBy gary morrisonMirowski asks us to carefully examine the questionable apple of knowledge, particularly when it comes glistening under the carmel candy imported from "science". On this subject, Mirowski succeeds in doing what no other writer has yet attempted. He exposes with one deft stroke, the origins of Neoclassical Economics as fraudulent on scientific grounds then pillories the dismal science

as equally useless to our understanding of human social interaction on empirical grounds. Though the subject matter may sound a little forbidding, the author's dry wit and irony manage to make economists as we know them, seem almost like characters drawn from a French farce. It has long puzzled me how Economics ever attained departmental status in the modern university? In any case, I found the book richly entertaining, yet profoundly informative. 12 of 13 people found the following review helpful. Neoclassical Economics as Outdated Physics By James F. Mueller Before there was "More Heat than Light", and his 'magnum opus' "Machine Dreams", there was this book, "Against Mechanism". Mirowski's main argument, covered in the first part of the book, is that neoclassical economics borrowed a lot of their methods and tools from 19th century physics. While more recent mainstream economists will either reject or understate the truth and importance of this claim, a brief review of the history of the "neoclassical paradigm" will reveal that the progenitors of this program were very interested in physics and eventually came to work this into economics by simply renaming the variables found in "mechanistic" equations and formulations. Notions of "natural market forces", "equilibrating tendencies", and "economic laws" can all be traced back to the theories found in the now obsolete 19th century physics program, where equilibrium concepts and conservation principles determined the way in which the world operated. New discoveries in physics has, of course, succeeded in throwing a lot of this out. Unfortunately, mainstream economics has yet to realize the "errors" of their way. This, I believe, can be attributed to the similarities that exist between both the supporters and critics of neoclassical economics. Critics of the mainstream approach (New Institutional Economics, Austrian Economics, Game Theorists, and many others) still seem to believe in the "natural forces" of the market. For example, any disequilibrium tendencies or forces can be blamed on "exogenous" elements, like natural disasters or government intervention. [Absent all intervention, markets will clear] --- so the argument goes. Even critics of the equilibrating free market argue that the only solution to the "inherently unstable" market is government intervention, ignoring the possibility that the problems with a "rapacious" market are sometimes even more evident in government regulation. This book opened up my eyes to the very real possibility in the myth or absence of any universal economic law. The methods employed for either justifying or empirically proving concepts like diminishing marginal utility or comparative advantage are standards that have been borrowed from a now defunct and thoroughly untenable scientific research program. One will finish this book thinking to himself "why do scientists and philosophers get to have all the fun?" It is time that economists really begin revolutionizing or subverting their current paradigm in hopes of finding a better and more useful alternative.

'...the history of economic theory at its best.'-EASTERN ECONOMIC JOURNAL

...Mirowski...is usually extremely perceptive in his criticisms....He is one of those rare economists who is fun to read. His scope of knowledge makes one feel stupid at times, but it also makes one want to learn more...THE JOURNAL OF ECONOMIC LITERATURE...the history of economic theory at its best. (Eastern Economic Journal) A fundamentally important work for economics....The volume is impressively done and highly readable....the work positively radiates authority....Excellent bibliography. A must acquisition. (Choice)...a stimulating piece of work. (History Of Economics )Of the new generation of economic methodologists...the most talented and outspoken may be Philip Mirowski...^IAgainst Mechanism^R is an important work that deserves to be widely read, especially for its penetrating and original analysis of the meaning of the 'marginal revolution' and the problems of scientism in modern neoclassical economics. (Austrian Economics Newsletter)About the Author Philip Mirowski is Carl Koch Professor of Economics and the History and Philosophy of Science at the University of Notre Dame. His areas of specialization are in the history and philosophy of economics and the politics and economics of knowledge, with subsidiary areas in evolutionary computational economics, the economics of science and technological change, science studies and the history of the natural sciences. His most recent books include The Effortless Economy of Science (2004, winner of the Ludwig Fleck Prize from the Society for the Social Studies of Science), Machine Dreams (Cambridge University Press, 2001) and ScienceMart (2011), and he edited Agreement on Demand (2006), Science Bought and Sold (2001) and The Road from Mont Pelerin (2009). His landmark book More Heat than Light (Cambridge University Press, 1989) has been translated into French (2001). He has been the recipient of fellowships from the Fulbright program and New York University and was elected visiting Fellow at All Souls College, Oxford. He was elected President of the History of Economics Society for 2011.