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Mirowski, Philip (Editor). Natural Images in Economic Thought: "Markets Read in Tooth and Claw". (Historical Perspectives on Modern Economics) xiv + 615 pp., illus., figs., tables, bibls., index. Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

The book is the latest of fifteen or so in a series edited by Crauford Goodwin. Many of the series books, such as this one, break through the biographical or high-theoretical or idiot-boy social scientific approaches that have so far characterized the history of economics. The "history of thought" (as economists call it) started as histories of science do in a mélange of hagiography and just-so stories. With Natural Images the history of economic science achieves intellectual parity with echt history of other sciences, such as Simon Schaffer and Steven Shapin on Boyle or Gerald Geison on Pasteur. It brings rhetoric, French psychoanalysis, hermeneutics, feminist theory, and above all the methods of a critical history to bear on economics.

The book arose out of a conference celebrating the accession of its editor to a chair in the history and philosophy (more properly the rhetoric and sociology) of science at Notre Dame in 1991. One cannot normally get scholars to divert their programs to fit a conference volume, but Philip Mirowski's arrangement of the varied flowers here is unusually interesting. The arrangement is informed by the central theme of Mirowski's work: like some other sciences (evolutionary biology most notably; or history itself), economics has a history that still matters. Mirowski wants the sort of history written for biology and history to be written for the dismal science. The book therefore is evenly divided

between exporters, historians of science such as I. B. Cohen, Sharon Kingsland, and Theodore Porter, and importers, economists such as Arjo Klamer, Michael Hutter, Claude Ménard, and Mirowski himself. A result is that many of the papers touch on evolution and statistics, fields which are next door to economics and much studied by historians of science.

The leading question is how the realm of "natural" as against "social" has been constructed in economics. The contributors range in answer from "no construction: the Natural is just there" to Mirowski's own preferred position, that the two words are interlocked metaphors in scientific arguments. Mirowski's position is shared by Klamer, Hutter, Timothy Alborn, David Moore, and Thomas Leonard among the contributors, and more widely by Bruno Latour, Richard Rorty, Paul Feyerabend, and Mary Douglas. Though puzzlingly Mirowski does not acknowledge it in so many words, the radical position could be called "rhetorical." (Thus the little joke about "read" / "red" in the subtitle.) Much of the book--most explicitly the astonishing essay by Klamer and Leonard "So What's an Economic Metaphor?"--could be read as a rhetoric of economic science. As Mirowski puts it, rejecting the three other positions also present, "metaphors here do not come into play solely as literary frills, or as a ghostly hermeneutics suspended above the rock-solid external world, or as weapons in a war of all against all; here, rather, their analysis promises the leveling of all disciplinary pretensions" (p. 13). - And a good thing, too.

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