

2017 Distinguished Fellow Award

At the just concluded History of Economics Society meetings in Toronto, Philip Mirowski was named a Distinguished Fellow of the History of Economics Society. In receiving this honor, he joins a select group of accomplished and influential historians of economics, whose names can be found on the HES website: <http://historyofeconomics.org/awards-and-honors/distinguished-fellow/>

Several strong candidates for the honor were nominated by the membership this year, and the Distinguished Fellow Committee, which consisted of Jeff Biddle, Robert Leonard and Margaret Schabas, agreed unanimously that Mirowski was the most deserving of these candidates.

Mirowski's scholarship has had a large and positive impact on our field. The committee agreed with those writing letters in support of his candidacy that Mirowski's work has been "transformational": that is, it has changed the way that scholars in our field understand the history of economics since the mid 1800s. As one of these letters argued concerning Mirowski's 1989 book *More Heat than Light*, "Mirowski's interpretation . . . was forceful and robust. It was what the literary theorist Stanley Fish would call a "strong interpretation", an interpretation sufficiently compelling among the community of historians of economics that they could no longer ignore his interpretation but rather had to incorporate or address it in their own interpretations of the writings of that period", while the 2001 book *Machine Dreams* "again forced those who wrote on the economics of information and the transformation of post war economics to engage directly with both his sources and his arguments." The letter went on to point out that "Mirowski and his work "cause trouble" and responses to it are excited and serious. It is hard to remain neutral with respect to his arguments and his polemics."

Mirowski has indeed been a controversial figure in our field. But his provocative assertions about and re-interpretations of the history of economics are grounded in the essential features of his work: a painstaking use of archival materials and a mastery of several far-flung discourses and literatures. These qualities of Mirowski's work have served as a positive example for scholars who wish to flesh out and further substantiate his vision of the history of modern economics, while for those who have disagreed with his vision, in part or in whole, these qualities present a challenge: those who wish to successfully rebut Mirowski must work as hard as Mirowski has worked, reassessing his evidence and offering evidence of their own. Both types of reaction have resulted in a higher quality of scholarship in our field.

The Committee also took note of Mirowski's role in the broader movement by which historians of economics have become more familiar with the methods and perspectives of scholars in other fields, including history, sociology, and science studies, methods and perspectives that have most certainly enriched scholarship in the history of economics. Another of the supporting letters noted that "In Mirowski's work, we find the positive example of how the historian of economics should stand alongside, fruitfully engage, and challenge the historian of science, the science studies scholar, the philosopher, and the political theorist".

A third reason for honoring Mirowski is the impact of his scholarship beyond the history of economics community. Mirowski's reinterpretations of the history of modern economics in *More Heat than Light* were immediately recognized by historians of science, historians of social science, science studies scholars and others as an important work. The same is true of *Machine Dreams*. According to "Google Scholar", Mirowski's articles, books, and the volumes he has edited have been cited more than 10,000 times. *More Heat than Light* has been cited over 2000 times, and *Machine Dreams* over 1000 times.

Mirowski has also contributed to our field as a mentor to younger colleagues at Notre Dame, and as an advisor to several graduate students who have gone on to become active scholars. Finally, the Committee took note of his service to our society as President, Vice President, and Executive Committee member.

Philip Mirowski is certainly a very deserving recipient of the History of Economic Society's highest honor.