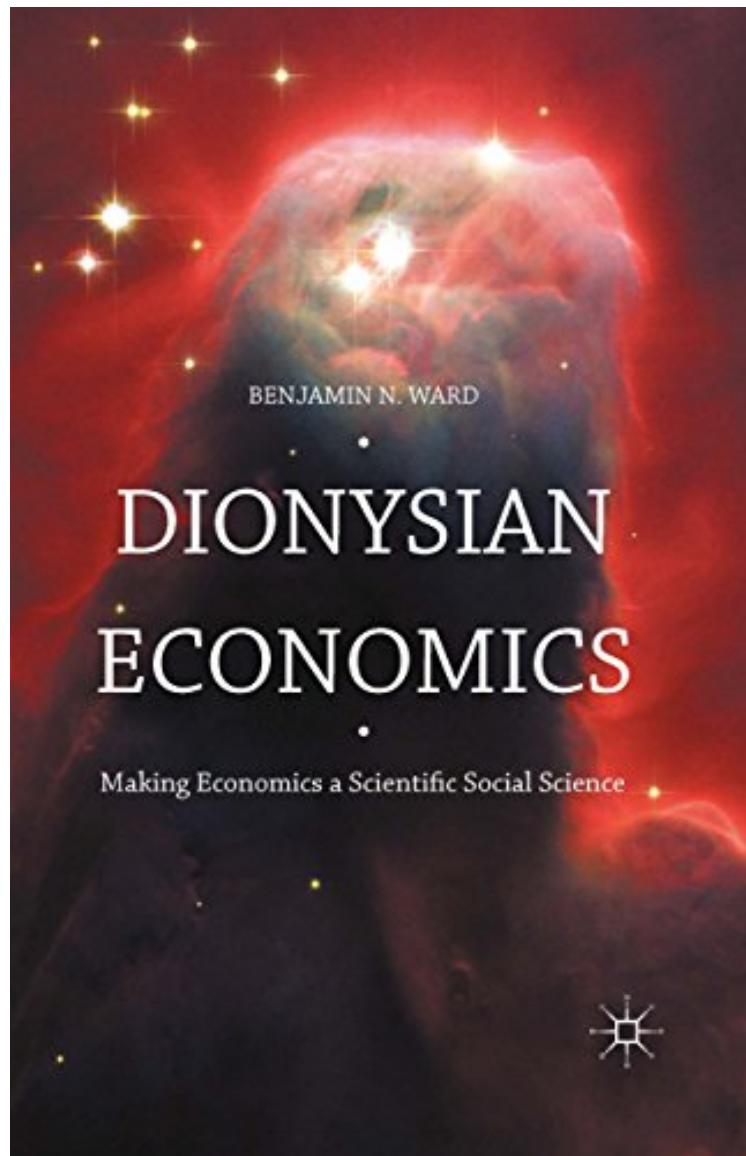


[E-BOOK] Dionysian Economics: Making Economics a Scientific Social Science

Dionysian Economics: Making Economics a Scientific Social Science

Benjamin Ward

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Benjamin Ward : Dionysian Economics: Making Economics a Scientific Social Science before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Dionysian Economics: Making Economics a Scientific Social Science:

Nietzsche distinguished between two forces in art: Apollonian, which represents order and reason, and Dionysian, which represents chaos and energy. An ideal work of art combines these two characteristics in a believable, relatable

balance. Economists, Ward argues, have operated for too long under the assumption that their work reflects scientific, Apollonian principals when these simply do not or cannot apply: "constants" in economics stand in for variables, mathematical equations represent the simplified ideal rather than the complex reality, and the core scientific principal of replication is all but ignored. In Dionysian Economics, Ward encourages economists to reintegrate the standard rigor of the scientific method into their work while embracing the fact that their prime indicators come from notoriously chaotic and changeable human beings. Rather than emphasizing its shortfalls compared to an extremely Apollonian science, such as physics, economics can aspire to the standards of a science that accounts for considerable Dionysian variation, such as biology. The book proposes that economists get closer to their dynamic objects of study, that they avoid the temptation to wish away dynamic complexity by using simplifying assumptions, and that they recognize the desire to take risks as fundamentally human.

Ward does a superb job of efficiently summarizing the gist of his argument in three easily digestible sections. Summing Up: Recommended. Graduate students through professionals. (S. K. Allen, Choice, Vol. 54 (4), December, 2016) This book proposes to develop 'Dionysian Economics' as an alternative to standard economics, here named 'Apollonian Economics'. A prologue explains the difference between Apollonian Economics and Dionysian Economics through an analogy with the opposition between Apollonian sun and Dionysian sun. Distance, dynamics and energy are involved in this opposition. The author considers standard economics as burdened by pretending its data are more stable than it is the case, distancing itself from the objects studied, and partially substituting ideology to scientific method. A true economic science should completely apply the scientific method, and recognize that economic events are complex, dynamic, in interaction. It is asserted that economic theory has adopted a mathematical language similar to physics, but less successfully than physics (except finance theory). Even if modern economics has positive aspects (econometrics, behavioral economics, quantitative finance), it suffers from important weaknesses. Economic theory, and especially macroeconomics, is too far from reality, trying mainly to find abstract theorems, often untested. Moreover, uncertainty is not well taken into account. The adequate economics, called by the author Dionysian Economics, should integrate dynamics, complexity, diversity and energy. The lack of stable constants invalidate the usefulness of mathematical economics for most economic questions. Economics should focus on empirical research, as does biology. This book criticizes standard economics. Even if the assertions are often grounded, they are not very innovative, since standard economics or mainstream economic theory has been extensively criticized, especially as being too theoretical or mathematical. The arguments often lack precision. There is a too frequent use of vague analogies. For example, the term 'energy' is often used, but its meaning is not clear. The originality of the book is in the opposition between Apollonian Economics and Dionysian Economics, but this one has multiple facets, not very clearly defined. The absolute necessity to adopt a scientific method is stressed, but without explaining exactly what it is (at least in the 55 pages of the proposal). I would have the following suggestions for the author:- Be more precise and rigorous.- An analogy can be useful in an explanation, but it cannot be a proof.- The opposition Apollonian/Dionysian comes from Nietzsche in The Birth of Tragedy. It should be quoted.- Explain how the book can be differentiated to numerous heterodox economics works. From the Back Cover Nietzsche distinguished between two forces in art: Apollonian, which represents order and reason, and Dionysian, which represents chaos and energy. An ideal work of art combines these two characteristics in a believable, relatable balance. Economists, Ward argues, have operated for too long under the assumption that their work reflects scientific, Apollonian principals when these simply do not or cannot apply: "constants" in economics stand in for variables, mathematical equations represent the simplified ideal rather than the complex reality, and the core scientific principal of replication is all but ignored. In Dionysian Economics, Ward encourages economists to reintegrate the standard rigor of the scientific method into their work while embracing the fact that their prime indicators come from notoriously chaotic and changeable human beings. Rather than emphasizing its shortfalls compared to an extremely Apollonian science, such as physics, economics can aspire to the standards of a science that accounts for considerable Dionysian variation, such as biology. The book proposes that economists get closer to their dynamic objects of study, that they avoid the temptation to wish away dynamic complexity by using simplifying assumptions, and that they recognize the desire to take risks as fundamentally human.