I. Today the history of science is entering the current ideology of cultural critique, which is enjoying great popularity precisely as it assumes the refined tone of a “critique of science”. Heidegger and the Frankfurt School have already expressed their unease [Unbehagen] with modern culture in the form of a critique of science, and the success of Paul Feyerabend (the apostate of the orthodox theory of science) testifies that this subject is by no means closed. Even though the current history of science usually gets on with its business while keeping out of cultural controversies, it nevertheless remains true that the history of science is not just an archivists’ enterprise to keep the memory of science alive. Instead, the history of science is also the “epistemological laboratory” of science. In the epistemological laboratory, events concerning the scientific domain are not lined up chronologically, one after the other, like in a rosary; instead they are built as constellations.\footnote{The several constants of a history of science express (usually in an encoded form) a theory of the human spirit \[des menschlichen Geistes\]. As did Kant first of all.} The following notes belong to Taubes, apart from those in square brackets, which are by the translator.

In the Preface to the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1787), in a few sentences Kant explained the epistemological aspects of the

\* Originally published as *Die Welt als Fiktion und Vorstellung. Konvergenzen der Realismus-Debatte in Wissenschaft und Kunst*, in D. Heinrich & W. Iser (Hgg.), *Funktionen des Fiktiven*. München: Fink Verlag 1983 (2007\textsuperscript{2}), 417–421. The editors thank Ethan and Tanaquil Taubes for their kindly permission to publish an English translation of this essay. The following notes belong to Taubes, apart from those in square brackets, which are by the translator.

\[\text{\footnotesize [Here it seems that Taubes is implicitly referring to a passage in the eighteenth thesis on the philosophy of history by Walter Benjamin: «Historicism contents itself with establishing a causal connection between various moments in history. But no fact that is a cause is for that very reason historical. It became historical posthumously, as it were, through events that may be separated from it by thousands of years. A historian who takes this as his point of departure stops telling the sequence of events like the beads of a rosary. Instead, he grasps the constellation which his own era has formed with a definite earlier one. Thus he establishes a conception of the present as the “time of the now” which is shot through with chips of Messianic time»; W. Benjamin, *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, in Id., *Illuminations*, Ed. by H. Arendt. New York: Schocken Books 1968, p. 263].}]

*Report*

*The World as Fiction and Representation.*

Convergences between Science and Art in the Realism Debate*

*Jacob Taubes*
development of modern physics since Galileo Galilei’s and Torricelli’s experiments. Following those experiments, «a light broke upon all natural philosophers».

Since then, this light has lit the way of the sciences and should also brighten the dark path of philosophy. «They learned that reason only perceives that which it produces after its own designs; that it must not be content to follow, as it were, in the leading-strings of nature, but must proceed in advance with principles of judgement according to unvarying laws, and compel nature to reply to its questions». Modern science approaches “nature”, «with the view, indeed, of receiving information from it, not, however, in the character of a pupil, who listens to all that his master chooses to tell him, but in that of a judge, who compels the witnesses to reply to those questions which he himself thinks fit to propose». Through this reversal or “intellectual revolution” [Revolution der Denkart] the natural sciences — so believes Kant — were «at length conducted into the path of certain progress».

Kant’s second Preface is the programme of his critique of reason, and it also constitutes the foundation of that concept of “science” which is presented by Fichte in the several drafts and versions of his Doctrine of Science, and by Hegel in his Phenomenology of Spirit, which he conceives as the introduction to his “system of science”. A reference to Hegel’s lapidary sentences in the Preface to the Phenomenology of Spirit can make us recognise those connections of the comprehension of science as the distinctive sign of the modern spirit: «That the True is actual only as system, or that Substance is essentially Subject, is expressed in the representation of the Absolute as Spirit — the most sublime Notion and the one which belongs to the modern age and its religion. [...] The Spirit, so developed, knows itself as Spirit, is Science; Science is its actuality and the realm which it builds for itself in its own element».

After the collapse of German Idealism, which takes place together with the development of the empirical sciences in the second half of the nineteenth century, Kant’s programme influences the neo-Kantians’ theory of science —

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3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

Hermann Cohen and Ernst Cassirer from the Marburg School, and Heinrich Rickert and Emil Lask from the Heidelberg School. Also in this case, World War I represents a caesura. Indeed, starting from WWI, “idealistic” is deemed a “lie” in the moral ambit, and as an “illusion” in the fields of art and science. Idealism in all its versions has fallen into disrepute.

Here it is not possible to suitably deal with the question of the failure of idealism with regard to the theory of science and aesthetics. I would just like to give an outline of the problem, i.e. to ascertain the common denominator of the consent against idealism, and particularly against the “idealistic” construction of science and art. Starting from WWI the realistic turn wins evidence [Evidenz] beyond every single argumentation. This consent dominates the organised ideology of the Catholic church (neo-Thomism), as well as the organised ideology of communism (historical and dialectical materialism). The philosophies of life and existence orchestrate in every possible way the general topic of the “world”, whose “resistance” becomes the index of its reality [Wirklichkeit] (Dilthey), while Heidegger raises the “world” to a self-evident presupposition, so that the mere problem [of its reality] becomes a “scandal”. I suppose that the different versions of “realism” can be distinguished into worldview [Weltanschauung], politics and cognitive interest [Erkenntnisinteresse]. The representatives of the different realisms do not belong to any ideologically organised party, and yet a secret covenant exists, which is, however, hard to grasp. I venture to uphold the following thesis: all versions of realism are dominated by an anti-modern temper, whether this be in the interpretation of modern science, or in the interpretation of modern art.

II. The element of cultural critique embedded in the reflection on the history of science is clearly brought into play by Heidegger’s critique of modern metaphysics. Taking this critique as a guiding principle we can identify, in a sort of turnaround, those moments which constitute the modern self-comprehension [Selbstverständnis] of science and art, so that we can define the

6 [In the original German text, Taubes’s phrase «von einem antimodernistischen Affekt» recalls – as a sort of indirect answer to it – the incipit of Carl Schmitt’s famous essay on Catholicism («Es gibt einen anti-römischen Affekt», «Here is an anti-Roman temper»), in which Schmitt denounces the “modern hate” against the juridical form and the political might that characterise the Roman Church as an institution; see C. Schmitt, Roman Catholicism and Political Form, Transl. by G.L. Ulmen. Westport: Greenwood Press 1996, p. 3].
unease with modernity [die Moderne] as manifested in the different debates on realism.

In *The Age of the World Picture* (an essay that refers to a lecture held in 1938 entitled *The Foundation of the Modern World Picture through Metaphysics*) Heidegger poses the question on «the essence of modern science».\(^7\) It is precisely when Heidegger tries to «come upon the metaphysical ground which provides the foundation of science as a modern phenomenon» that he encounters the problem: the world as a picture. At first the expression “modern world picture” does not seem to conceal any problem. The modern world picture stands out against the medieval and the ancient ones, but any view [of it] is conveyed through this distinction. But Heidegger rightly insists on the fact that “the modern world picture” is in itself a manifestation of modern self-consciousness [Selbstbewußtsein]. «The world picture does not change from an earlier medieval to a modern one; rather, that the world becomes picture at all is what distinguishes the essence of modernity».\(^8\) In a strict sense, it is not possible to talk of a medieval “world picture” or an ancient “world picture”, because the world was not represented or comprehended as a picture in either Antiquity or the Middle Ages. World picture [Weltbild] does not mean a copy [Abbild]; rather, here it betrays something of the idiom we use when saying that we are “in the picture” about something [wir sind über etwas “im Bilde”].\(^9\) I am in the picture [Ich bin im Bilde] also means: I know some information. «“World picture” does not mean “picture of the world” but, rather, the world grasped as picture».\(^10\) Only when the world appears as a picture can it be comprehended as a human «representation» [Vorstellung]. Schopenhauer’s version of the world as representation takes too rapid a grip, and one should rather think the representation in a scenic meaning. To


\(^8\) *Ivi*, p. 83 [Eng. tr. p. 68].

\(^9\) [The German expression (über jdn, etw) im Bilde sein means: to be informed, to be acquainted, to get to the bottom (of a matter), to be a sly one; see also the explanation given by Heidegger himself: «To be “in the picture” resonates with: being well informed, being equipped and prepared. Where the world becomes picture, beings as a whole are set in place as that for which man is prepared; that which, therefore, he correspondingly intends to bring before him, have before him, and, thereby, in a decisive sense, place before him»: *The Age of the World Picture*, p. 67].

\(^10\) *Ivi*, p. 82 [Eng. tr. p. 67].
The World as Fiction and Representation

represent means to stage. At this point in Heidegger’s analysis, a binding connection becomes evident between the scientific and the artistic experience in modernity. Modern art and modern science are founded – in many different ways – on the project, on representation, on fiction, without any reference to something preset, without any relation to a fixed centre. Heidegger’s analysis, phenomenologically oriented and [conducted] from a history of philosophy perspective, is expounded without reference to any work on the history of science, but is actually a philosophical commentary on the study conducted by Pierre Duhem, who provided an exposition of this historical connection in his ten-volume work *The System of the World: History of the Cosmological Doctrines from Plato to Copernicus.*

Even Duhem’s critics such as Alexandre Koyré and Annemarie Maier, who classified Galilei’s precursors more accurately [than him], were not able to shake Duhem’s fundamental thesis. What seems fundamental to me is Duhem’s idea about the dialectical function of the Bishop of Paris’s condemnation in 1277 of the Averroistic theses. Although condemnations may have had highly repressive consequences on the development of medieval philosophy, for the development of the natural sciences the theses by the Bishop of Paris, Etienne Temper, represent a breakthrough towards a new understanding of the world. They prepare the ground for a fictionalist conception of theory, which is constitutive for the self-comprehension of modern science. Heidegger founds his philosophical thesis on Duhem’s works on the history of science, without citing his source.

Therefore, it is not by chance that the whole critique against modernity, in its different tones of complaint, leads to [the idea of] the “loss of the centre”; that in modernity all countermovements related to aesthetics and the history of science flow into a pleading in favour of a “realistic” science and a “realistic” art. The examples are legion, but I shall restrict myself to mentioning just Hans Sedlmayr and Georg Lukács as the main authorities [Kronzeugen] of this pleading. The unreality [Irrealis] or the fictional character of the modern articulation, which brings back all substantiality to the subject, worries the established powers. So one can explain the fact that the two mutually

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conflicting ideologies — Catholic neo-Thomism and communist historical and dialectical materialism — form a united front against every “modern” interpretation of reality as a construct [ein Gewirktes] and, albeit differently, they always sound the same trumpet anyway, in order to evoke an immemorial “being” against all versions of the primacy of the idea, the spirit, the conscience, the project.

Here I have neither the intention nor the possibility to exhaustively deal with the problem of the congruence among the different “realisms”. I would just like to bring into play a point of view that as yet has not been introduced to the debates on “realisms”, the only one that can contribute to determining the position of those established powers in the “hermeneutical” global war [Weltbürger-Krieg]. The established powers – the Catholic church and the communist sway – are in opposition, for understandable reasons, and protest against the unrestrained liberation of the productive forces and imaginative faculties in the modern world. What I have tried to show here, first of all, by localising some positions of the theory of science, can be applied without difficulty to the Catholic and socialist position in the aesthetic ambit. In the field of art and aesthetics, the political and cultural consequences of this opposition against modernity [die Moderne] are even clearer than in the scientific field. Indeed the competition with the modern (Western and “capitalistic”) technologies gives the theory of science’s archaisms less opportunity to intervene in the technological practice. So we arrive at a paradoxical observation: while the “idealistic” interpretation of the reality is set off course from the philosophical or the ideological point of view, in actual fact it has imposed itself anonymously. In fact, any interpretation that understands the world as a “product of positing” [“Produkt des Setzens”] (Fichte), or as a “representation” (Schopenhauer) can count as “idealistic”, according to the broader meaning of the word. In other words: any interpretation that transforms the world into a possessive [Possessivum], without any support in a being that already exists beforehand. Therewith, however, one has exactly described the place where both technological and aesthetic imagination [Phantasie] is enhanced.

Translated from the German by Renata Badii
The World as Fiction and Representation 271