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From Theoretical to Stylistic Pluralism: Art, Science, and the Epistemology of Style

1. Style as a “boundary object”

This paper wishes to illuminate the vexed question of the relations between the arts and the sciences from the vantage point of the notion of “style”.¹ Ever since the nineteenth century, when both the “arts” and the “sciences” started to be formed and perceived as different activities and domains, the debate about their relationship raged, taking distinctive turns. Explicit attempts at breaking the “binary economy” opposing science and the arts, writ large, and to replace it with a discussion of the “boundary conditions” between the two took place in the 1990s. Instead of the question as to whether “science and art are incommensurable realms of knowledge”, the problem was advanced to recognize and study “the conditions under which objects become visible in culture, and in what manner are such visibilities characterized as ‘science’ or ‘art’” (Garrison & Jones, 1998). This paper seeks both to update this question and to offer a specific perspective on its treatment. It proposes that “boundary questions” at the interface between the arts and the sciences can be productively addressed by focusing on particular “boundary objects.” The concept of style is one such object: it circulates across disciplinary domains while simultaneously helping to constitute their limits. The concept of style has a long and complex history² and is the keystone around which the very discipline of art history was established as a “scientific” discipline (*Kunstwissenschaft*) during the nineteenth century. After a pe-

¹ In so doing, it takes up and extend a line of questioning explored during “Arts and Sciences, Historicizing Boundaries. 7th international workshop on Historical Epistemology” (Venice 9-10 June 2022). Rather than looking for logical demarcation criteria, the workshop questioned the arts/sciences dualism from an historical perspective (see <https://episthist.hypotheses.org/2958>).

² Sauerländer (1983) and Ginzburg (1998) provide compelling historical reconstructions of selected portions of the long and complex history of the notion of style.

riod in which “style went out of style”, (Lavin, 1995: 3) surpassed by iconology and the social history of art, the conceptual phoenix of style re-emerged from dust and sparked new debates in several disparate fields.³

One perhaps unexpected site for the re-emergence of the concept of *style* in the late twentieth century is the history and philosophy of science.⁴ At first glance, this interest among practicing historians and philosophers of science may appear surprising. The juxtaposition of “style” and “science” can seem almost oxymoronic. Traditionally associated with language, literature, or the arts – and even with domains such as fashion, characterized by the fleeting, the singular, and the idiosyncratic – style appears far removed from the timeless and universal aspirations often attributed to science. In contrast to the so-called “stylistic disciplines,” science is typically regarded as the most rigorous of human activities, where questions of form or ornament are irrelevant and only those of content – indeed, true content – are thought to matter.

Yet style has played a role not only in history and philosophy of science, but also in attempts to rethink the demarcation between science and other intellectual activities. In this context, Thomas Gieryn’s notion of *boundary-work* describes an “ideological style” deployed by scientists in constructing a public image of science by contrasting it favourably with non-scientific intellectual or technical practices (Gieryn, 1983). For this reason, style can fruitfully be understood as a *boundary object* (Star & Griesemer, 1989): a concept that circulates across disciplinary domains while taking on different meanings within each. More generally, such boundary concepts operate within what Peter Galison has called “trading zones,” sites of exchange between distinct disciplinary and material cultures where coordination becomes possible despite differences in language, practice, and epistemic commitments (Galison, 1997).

By foregrounding style in this way, the paper aims to move beyond the assumption of a rigid “binary economy” separating the arts from the sciences, while nevertheless preserving a clear view of the distinctive features and epistemic specificities of each domain. In the next section (§2), I will present Ian Hacking’s notion of styles of scientific reasoning and his idea that scientific styles are to be thought of as distinct from artistic and literary styles. In section §3, I will take issue with Hacking’s proposal and show how the notion of synonymy at the heart of discussions about

³ Mermet (2024), De Donato (2024) and the present thematic issue of *Scenari* should be added to the list of contemporary references to style-studies in ethics, linguistics, sociology, anthropology to be found in Vagelli (2024b).

⁴ See Vagelli (2024a,b) for references to the reconstructions of the migration of style from art history to history and philosophy of science as well as to overviews of the role of style in science.

style in both art history and philosophy can be used as a touchstone for understanding a defining feature of styles of reasoning, i.e. theoretical pluralism. In this context, I will refer to the opposing views of Ernst Gombrich and Nelson Goodman on the subject.

2. On Hacking's "styles of scientific reasoning" vis-à-vis artistic styles

One of the most influential instances of stylistic studies of science is Ian Hacking's notion of "styles of scientific reasoning" (Hacking, 1982; 1992; 2012). From the historian of science A. C. Crombie, Hacking extracts a list of six styles of reasoning characterizing Western science: mathematical postulation, experimental exploration and measurement, hypothetical modelling, taxonomical and statistical reasoning, and historical-genetical explanation (Hacking, 1982). Hacking's philosophical development of the idea insists on styles of scientific reasoning as historically emerging ways of reasoning that support our finding out things about the world. Scientific styles, in Hacking's account, have a self-authenticating feature: they bring about the new kinds of objects, types of evidence, classes of true-or-false sentences, kinds of laws or modalities, and possibilities which it reasons about (Hacking, 1992). One of the features Hacking has particularly insisted on is the introduction of new types of propositions that were simply not available prior to the emergence of a given style. Seen from this angle, Hacking's notion of styles of scientific reasoning has striking similarities with the notion of "discursive practices" by Michel Foucault: indeed, one way of capturing what Hacking has in mind when speaking of different styles of reasoning constituting the sciences is an historically emerging set of rules for the formation of statements.⁵ Along these "novelties" a new style of scientific reasoning introduces, there are also self-stabilizing techniques that are meant to ensure the survival of the given style through time. A notion of style understood along these lines potentially bear similarities with some of the ways in which style has been conceived in the arts: as a set of norms governing practices, historically situated standards of correctness, and distinctive ways of seeing and making intelligible.

However, while Crombie's original notion was precisely meant to capture the interplay of the engineering, architectural and creative and artistic mind, especially during the Renaissance, Hacking's version of the same idea, on the contrary, surprisingly rejects its derivation from the arts and aims to redefine the concept anew.⁶ It is true that Hacking

⁵ On the proximity of Hacking's styles to Foucault's discursive practices see Vagelli (2025).

⁶ This contrastive position is partly motivated by an attempt on his side to defend his original take from subsequent uptakes of the idea. Arnold Davidson, for instance, who

generally avoids discussing at length the sources of his idea of style.⁷ Hacking's refusal to engage in a sustained critical reflection on artistic styles remains nevertheless striding and intellectually puzzling. In scanty passages, Hacking mentions few reasons of dissatisfaction with artistic styles, chiefly lamenting the lack of definition and too wide application, and focus on individual and local uses of style rather on general, overarching ones. In what follows, I will review these concerns.

In "Language, Truth and Reason" the 1982 manifesto of his styles-project, Hacking writes:

Doubtless the very word "style" is suspect. It is cribbed from art critics and historians, who have not evolved a uniform connotation for the word. Nor would all their remarks about style tidily transfer to modes of reasoning [...] the idea of a style carries a good deal of baggage left over from art and literary critics. I have no confidence that their discussion will help us. It may even do us harm.⁸

Hacking reproaches art and literary critics for not having provided a unique and sharp definition of the concept. The difficult definition of style is a rather well-known fact to art and literary critics themselves. In an authoritative essay on style, art historian Meyer Schapiro, for instance, admits that no formal definition of styles can be given, and that the art historian must limit himself to a descriptive attitude, resorting to point to the inventor or representative of a certain style, a style time and place of appearance and its relations to other styles, rather than to specific defining or identifying criteria.⁹

While this is true, it should be noted that Hacking's own uptake of the notion of style as applied to the sciences is in a somewhat similar position – the reader will look in vain for an explicit definition of styles of scientific reasoning in Hacking's writings on the subject. The phase of his styles-project corresponding to the publication of "'Styles' for historians and for philosophers", his second major publication in the project, was marked by the attempt at providing identification criteria for styles of scientific reasoning.

initially drew the concept of styles of reasoning from Hacking himself, explored the artistic derivation of styles by molding the concept through reference to Heinrich Wölfflin and Michael Baxandall. See Vagelli 2024b for a development of this point.

⁷ While the indirect influences on Hacking's notion of styles of reasoning are numerous – including Michel Foucault and Paul Feyerabend, among others – only Crombie, and to a lesser extent Ludwik Fleck, are explicitly acknowledged by Hacking as earlier figures who applied the concept of style to the sciences.

⁸ Hacking, 2002 (1982): 162; cf. Hacking, 1985: 456; 2008: 17-20; 2012: 601.

⁹ Schapiro, 1953: 338. The inventory of Hacking's archival fonds at the University of Toronto lists a printed copy of Meyer Schapiro's essay on "Style" which was thus probably well known by Hacking.

Such criteria included the class of “novelties” that a style brings into view: kinds of objects, types of evidence, classes of true-or-false sentences, kinds of laws or modalities, and possibilities (Hacking, 1992). Hacking has later given up the enterprise of giving necessary and sufficient criteria for identifying styles, limiting himself to an ostensive definition – the list of six styles historically identified by Crombie.¹⁰ It is clear, thus, that the lack of explicit definition should not be considered a point of departure between artistic and scientific styles. It should on the contrary be noticed that, perhaps, in both cases, it is probably the lack of clear definition that concurs to the flexibility and explanatory power of the concept.

Let us now review the second of Hacking’s regrets about style:

Literary critics have long distinguished a “generalizing” and a “personalizing” use of the word “style.” There is a Balzacian style and there is Balzac’s style. Equally, in swimming, there is the Australian crawl and freestyle, as opposed to the style of Patti Gonzalez, that can be imitated but is inimitably hers. (Hacking, 2002 [1992]: 179-180)

While it is perfectly legitimate, Hacking argues, to talk of an individual scientist, a research group, or a tradition as instantiating a given style of scientific reasoning – Hacking explicitly favors the “generalizing” function of style, over the “personalizing” one.

A key reason for his favoring the “generalizing” function is that Hacking conceives of his styles as a set of very general ways of finding out things about the world that human beings have developed through their evolutionary history. “Transformations in concepts and styles of reasoning”, Hacking argues, “are the product of countless trickles rather than the intervention of single individuals”.¹¹ The two uses of style highlighted by Hacking map onto the tension, within science studies, between an “individualizing” and a “universalizing” function of scientific styles: the first function characterizes styles conceived as local, communitarian, national or cultural; the latter, those that tend to be trans-historical and trans-cultural. In this latter sense, styles are synonymous with “method”, whereas in the former case, there is a strong opposition between “scientific style” and “scientific method”. Between local scientific and artistic styles there is a relation of *synonymy*, whereas scientific ones represent an *analogical extension* of the latter.¹²

¹⁰ Hacking, 2012: 1.

¹¹ Hacking, 1990: 8.

¹² See Gayon, 1999. The most notable study of science in stylistic terms foregrounding the contextual, geographical, and sociological aspects of scientific knowledge is without doubt the one by Ludwik Fleck. In the 1990s the notion of “national styles in science” still had currency (Daston-Otte, 1991). Cf. Harwood (1993) a sociological, comparative

One aspect Hacking wishes to distance himself from by favoring the generalizing understanding of style over the personalizing/localizing one, it's the problematic legacy of style concepts in the early twentieth century. As Carlo Ginzburg notes, nineteenth-century attempts to link history, anthropology, and biology fostered a conflation of national character, style, and race.¹³ More positively, Hacking's contrasting preference here interestingly resonates with Foucault's skepticism towards the ideas of authorship and on the conscious intentionality of the individual subject and the corresponding emphasis on super-individual discursive formations.¹⁴ This has interesting consequences, that should be considered developing the comparison with artistic styles further.

3. Style, Synonymy and Worldmaking

This is in stark contrast with one of the understandings of style in art history and criticism, where stylistic matters lies at the level of the artist's or writer's individual choice. In this interpretation, style is conceived as a "means of value-expression" or as a "common ground against which to measure an artist's originality".¹⁵ One version of this view is defended by Ernst H. Gombrich, for whom style is chiefly a matter of choice among "alternative ways of doing things".¹⁶ Gombrich considered synonymy the foundation for this understanding of style, and he quotes and underscores a claim by linguist Stephen Ullman to this effect:

The pivot of the whole theory of expressiveness is the concept of *choice*. There can be no question of style unless the speaker or writer has the possibility of choosing between alternative forms of expression. Synonymy, in the widest sense of the term, lies at the root of the whole problem of style. (Ullman, 1957: 6)

study – inspired by Fleck – of biological communities in the US and in Germany in the early decades of the nineteenth century.

¹³ Ginzburg 1998: 41. Although not racially or ethnically connoted, the styles Hacking describes remain largely Eurocentric, emerging – as he himself acknowledges – from European intellectual elites later turned global (see Vagelli 2026).

¹⁴ Hacking 1979: 42. Gavroglu (1991) is an application of Hacking's notion of styles of scientific reasoning to the work of individual researchers. Kostas Gavroglu and Theodore Arabatzis are working on the idea of a difference in scale to which styles of scientific reasoning could be applied to, from the individual to the collective and national levels (Gavroglu & Arabatzis, forthcoming).

¹⁵ Schapiro, 1953: 336; Gombrich, 1968: 353.

¹⁶ Gombrich, 1968.

In this framework, what defines style is the way one decides to move when confronted with a choice among different, equally valid alternatives. For the options to be considered alternatives, they must be about one and the same thing.

Gombrich's psychologism as well his emphasis on styles as a matter of choice are self-admittedly indebted to Karl Popper's methodological individualism.¹⁷ Popper's methodological individualism amounts to the idea that collective social entities have no ontological status and social phenomena should be analysed in terms of individuals, of their attitudes, expectations, relations".¹⁸ Similarly to what Popper thinks about the sciences, Gombrich characterises also the arts as problem-solving activities proceeding by trial-and-error. Gombrich feared that the study of structures and patterns would hide remnants of the philosophy of Hegel and Marx.¹⁹ Because of its emphasis on the individual, this understanding of style does not seem to fare well with Hacking's styles of scientific reasoning. A style of scientific reasoning is rather conceived by Hacking as an autonomous and impersonal organising concept. In this view, stylistic features can go unnoticed by any given scientist, as in fact they often do.

A contrasting understanding of style that might have served better Hacking's purposes is the one provided by Nelson Goodman, a philosopher whose work was very well known by Hacking. In his "The Status of Style" – which appeared in 1975 and was reprinted soon after in *Ways of Worldmaking* (1978) – Goodman developed a critique of the prevailing concept of style among art critics, and in particular of Gombrich's psychologism. The understanding of style as reduced to the alternative possibilities faced by the artist at a given moment relies on a notion of synonymy conceived as the free choice between two existing alternatives of saying and doing "exactly the same thing".²⁰ This is untenable, argues Goodman, for "no two terms have exactly the same meaning".

But if it does not spring from the artist's intentional choice, what is then the source of style? According to Goodman, matters of style are not reducible to questions of "form" and the line between what style does and does not entail does not coincide with the distinction between content and form. Rather, it "cuts across" it, since "style comprises certain characteristic features both of what is said and of how it is said,

¹⁷ On Gombrich's ties to Popper philosophy of science and society see Gombrich (1972: ix, 17, 231; 1982) and Hemingway (2009).

¹⁸ Popper, 1976: 136.

¹⁹ Gombrich, 1979: 57, 61.

²⁰ Goodman, 1978: 24-5.

both of subject and of wording, both of content and of form”.²¹ In order for a given property – of a statement, a structure or a feeling – to count as stylistic, it has to function as “an individual or a group signature”. A feature or trait of any kind of work should be considered “stylistic” only when “it associates a work with one rather than another artist, period, region, school, etc.”²² In other words, style “bespeaks” or is the metaphorical “signature” of either an individual or a group. “Stylistic properties help answer the questions: who? when? where?” only insofar as they are “properties of the functioning of the work as a symbol”.²³ In other terms, in Goodman, style operates through exemplification rather than representation.

It is in a similar light that one may read also Hacking’s idea of each style of scientific reasoning having a corresponding founding figure, a “trailblazer”, Hacking calls them. Thales is not so much the genius upon whose head a lamp went off, as Kant has it in the *Critique*, but, in Hacking’s account, Thales becomes the signpost for the “crystallization” of the demonstrative style of reasoning.²⁴

Contrary to Gombrich’s focus on the individual, Goodman’s views instead put forward a generalized understanding of style as symbolic function. On top of this, style is a way of “worldmaking”; it does not simply represent pre-existing subjects or contents but in fact contributes to their introduction and shaping. The alternatives of the stylistic-choice are not pre-given and they are the by-product of the emergence of a new style. In this sense, styles are not merely aesthetic features but frameworks that help shape what can count as objects, facts, and forms of knowledge – a view that resonates with Ian Hacking’s account of styles of scientific reasoning.

Although, as mentioned above, Hacking abandons the idea of necessary and sufficient conditions for styles, he never abandons the idea that style of scientific reasoning must account for a kind of endurance, of stability, that science has, and art does not seem to have – at least not of the same kind or to the same degree. This marks an interesting difference between Hacking and Thomas Kuhn. Kuhn, when observing the rapidity with which scientific books pass from having an active role in research libraries to historical sections, remarks how “in contrast with art, science destroys its past”, meaning that in art history there

²¹ Goodman, 1978: 27.

²² Goodman, 1978: 34.

²³ Goodman, 1978: 35.

²⁴ The other “trailblazers” Hacking refers to are Galileo for experimentation and hypothetical modelling, Cesalpino or Linnaeus for taxonomy, Pascal for probability, and Darwin/Marx/Freud or Ricardo/Bopp/Cuvier for the historical-genetical style (Hacking, 2002: 126, 185; Hacking, 2008: 17).

is often a glorification of past styles, whereas in the history of science the relation with past theories is commonly taken to be contrastive.²⁵ Kuhn seems to claim that in art, in contrast with science, there are no revolutions. Contrary to Kuhn, thus, who believed that the revolutionary character of science is what distinguished it from the arts, Hacking emphasizes stability.

Particularly illuminating on this respect is Hacking's brief example of fauvism:

We should not envisage first a style and then the novelties. That is one of the many merits of the word "style." We did not first have fauvism, and then Matisse and Derain painting fauve pictures in 1905. The style comes into being with the instances, although (as the example of the fauves makes plain) the recognition of something as new, even the naming of it, may solidify the style after it has begun. What the word "style" does not make plain is why fauvism fades almost as soon as named, while a few styles of reasoning become autonomous of their origins and their originators. That is a pressing philosophical issue in the study of styles of reasoning.²⁶

Why did Fauvism fade "as soon as named"? Why do some parts of science accumulate whereas arts do not? The answer to these questions lies in Hacking's notions of "self-authentication" and "self-stabilization". Such notions reflect a conservative strategy aimed at distinguishing stable and accumulating scientific styles from non-scientific, i.e. artistic, literary, religious and philosophical ones.²⁷ Hacking gives the same account both of declining or supervened styles and of non-scientific ones: they never possessed the sufficient stabilizing techniques granting them survival. The only selection criterion to both govern and explain the existence and the survival of styles of reasoning is the effectiveness of these techniques, also within scientific styles themselves. If Paracelsus' hermetic medicine did not survive it is not because it lacked rationality or rational norms of structuration. On the contrary, it had these rules, but they did not engender sufficient stabilization effects. Hacking's reliance on self-stabilizing techniques is therefore supposed to support a certain specificity of scientific concepts over artistic ones.

²⁵ Kuhn 1977: 381.

²⁶ Hacking 2002: 189. Also see the similar examples of the style empire or Jugendstil, which "flourish for short periods of time after which they cease and can at most be imitated" (Hacking, 1992, p. 139).

²⁷ Hacking, 2002: 196.

4. On methodological and theoretical forms of “stylistic pluralism”

Issues raised in §3 are highly relevant for the philosophy of science, as they intersect directly with the topic of scientific pluralism. In what follows, I am going to distinguish between two forms of pluralism that can be built upon Hacking’s styles-project – a methodological, inter-stylistic and a theoretical, infra-stylistic form of pluralism. Concerning the former, Hacking speaks of “anarcho-rationalism” and suggests that “our overall interests in truth and reason may well be served by letting other styles of reason evolve in their own ways, unfettered by a more imperial kind of rationalism.”²⁸ Contrary to artistic styles, scientific styles seem to be rather cumulative and collaborative. Hacking’s styles of scientific reasoning, the mathematical, the modelling, the laboratory, the statistical one and so forth, not only can coexist, but they shall, at least in principle, be amenable to a simultaneous use in a modern research laboratory or by a single modern researcher.

This points to a form of pluralism in which multiple sets of standards coexist and may, at certain points, be brought into productive interaction. One can almost hear echoes of Paul Feyerabend’s principle of proliferation – the view that scientists should actively generate theories that conflict with accepted and even well-confirmed positions. Almost, since the inter-stylistic pluralism sketched here should be consistent with the idea of scientific progress understood as the function of the combined progress of several research programs.²⁹ This view is incompatible with the mutual exclusion implied by different artistic styles when conceived as optical schemes³⁰ or, as in Kuhn’s paradigms, as totalizing “ways of seeing the world”. It is instead to some extent compatible with eclecticism or historicism, the coexistence and simultaneous use of different architectonic styles.³¹

The second form of pluralism implied by styles of scientific reasoning is infra-stylistic and it represents a version of theoretical pluralism. It has been suggested that theoretical pluralism was developed by philosophers critically reacting or at any rate reformulating Popper’s approach: Paul Feyerabend, whose early philosophical work is closely associated with the term, but also with figures such as Noretta Koertge and Imre Lakatos.³²

²⁸ Hacking, 2002 [1982]: 176.

²⁹ On Feyerabend’s principle of proliferation see Wray, 2021: 74. Feyerabend has also extensively reflected on the analogies between artistic styles and scientific theories (see Vagelli, 2024b).

³⁰ This understanding can for instance be found in Wölfflin (Wölfflin, 1950: 23).

³¹ See Ginzburg 1998: 32, 38. Compared to the sciences, however, in the arts it remains comparatively more difficult to find a place for the notion of progress.

³² Martin (1972). To some extent, Larry Laudan and Hacking himself can be seen as belonging to this group of “renegade Popperians”. I owe the term “renegade Popperians” to Paul Roth.

For Feyerabend, theoretical pluralism amounts to the view that, since facts are not autonomous, they cannot serve as the ultimate authority: what we have are theories competing with other theories, yet comparison among them is ultimately impossible because they are incommensurable.³³

Hacking's own version of theoretical pluralism is articulated through a distinctive feature of styles of scientific reasoning, namely the idea that:

A style of reasoning [...] is concerned with truth-or-falsehood. Two parties, agreeing to the same styles of reasoning, may well totally disagree on the upshot, one party holding for true what the other party rejects.³⁴

This view is indebted to Foucault and, in particular, to what Hacking calls “Foucault’s fork”: the idea that competing bodies of belief may share the same underlying rules of formation.³⁵ An illustrative example is the contrast between the taxonomies of Linnaeus and Adanson, which Foucault in *Les mots et les choses* showed to belong to the same *âge classique* of natural history, where the varieties of flora and fauna were arranged in systematic tableaux.³⁶ The implication is that comparison among theories grounded in the same style of reasoning remains possible. Competing theories may rely on the same kind of evidence – structured by a shared style of reasoning – and yet diverge in their theoretical articulation; the evaluation of such alternatives thus remains meaningful. When conflict appears irreconcilable, identifying shared rules of formation may prove productive, as it encourages the search for infra-stylistic, inter-theoretical translatability through diversity – an approach that stands in contrast to the appeal to incommensurability.

As remarked by Wray, theory change has been discussed in quite abstract terms, as merely involving a decision to select one of two or more options. In this sense, Hacking’s theoretical pluralism, operating through the notion of styles of scientific reasoning, can help articulate a broader notion of stylistic pluralism. Stylistic pluralism is more encompassing than theoretical pluralism: styles operate at a deeper level than theories, which are formulated against the background of a given style of reasoning. Furthermore, stylistic pluralism invites a more thorough discussion of how the apparently irreconcilable differences between alternative theoretical explanations of a given phenomenon are to be studied from the point of view of their (often shared) rules of formation. For this reason,

³³ See Wray (2021).

³⁴ Hacking, 2002: 90.

³⁵ *Ibidem*.

³⁶ See Vagelli (2024a: 182) for the references to Foucault’s examples from economic theory discussed in *Les mots et les choses*.

discussions of pluralism in artistic or literary domains may provide useful resources and analogies for understanding pluralism in the sciences.

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Dal pluralismo teorico a quello stilistico: Arte, scienza ed epistemologia dello stile

Questo contributo esplora la nozione di stile all'intersezione tra arti e scienze e la utilizza per storicizzare e rivedere i termini della divisione tra i due ambiti. In questo quadro, il saggio si confronta criticamente con il concetto di stili di ragionamento scientifico elaborato da Ian Hacking. Sebbene Hacking resista all'idea di tracciare forti analogie tra stili artistici e scientifici, sostengo che tale resistenza finisca per oscurare produttivi punti di contatto tra i due domini. Ponendo l'analisi di Hacking in dialogo con le riflessioni di Ernst Gombrich sulla tradizione artistica e il problem-solving, nonché con l'analisi di Nelson Goodman dei sistemi simbolici e del worldmaking, il contributo rivaluta la portata dello stile oltre i confini del ragionamento scientifico. In tal modo, esso ripensa anche la relazione tra pluralismo teorico e pluralismo stilistico, suggerendo che gli stili forniscono una cornice più profonda delle teorie per comprendere il pluralismo tanto nelle scienze quanto nelle arti.

PAROLE CHIAVE: Stili artistici; Oggetti di confine; Ian Hacking; Stili di ragionamento scientifico; Pluralismo stilistico.

From Theoretical to Stylistic Pluralism: Art, Science, and the Epistemology of Style

This paper explores the notion of *style* at the intersection of the arts and the sciences and uses it to historicize and revise the terms of the divide between the two. In this framework, the paper critically engages with Ian Hacking's concept of *styles of scientific reasoning*. While Hacking resists drawing strong analogies between artistic and scientific styles, I argue that this resistance obscures productive points of contact between the two domains. By placing Hacking's account in dialogue with Ernst Gombrich's reflections on artistic tradition and problem-solving, as well as Nelson Goodman's analysis of symbol systems and worldmaking, the paper reassesses the significance of style beyond the confines of scientific reasoning. In doing so, it also revisits the relation between *theoretical pluralism* and *stylistic pluralism*, suggesting that styles provide a deeper framework than theories for understanding pluralism across both the sciences and the arts.

KEYWORDS: Artistic Styles; Boundary objects; Ian Hacking; Styles of scientific reasoning; Stylistic pluralism.