



# The Effortless Economy of Science? (Science and Cultural Theory)

*Philip Mirowski*

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A leading scholar of the history and philosophy of economic thought, Philip Mirowski argues that there has been a top-to-bottom transformation in how scientific research is organized and funded in Western countries over the past two decades and that these changes necessitate a reexamination of the ways that science and economics interact. Mirowski insists on the need to bring together the insights of economics, science studies, and the philosophy of science in order to understand how and why particular research programs get stabilized through interdisciplinary appropriation, controlled attributions of error, and funding restrictions.

Mirowski contends that neoclassical economists have persistently presumed and advanced an “effortless economy of science,” a misleading model of a self-sufficient and conceptually self-referential social structure that transcends market operations in pursuit of absolute truth. In the stunning essays collected here, he presents a radical critique of the ways that neoclassical economics is used to support, explain, and legitimate the current social practices underlying the funding and selection of “successful” science projects. He questions a host of theories, including the portraits of science put forth by Karl Popper, Michael Polanyi, and Thomas Kuhn. Among the many topics he examines are the social stabilization of quantitative measurement, the repressed history of econometrics, and the social construction of the laws of supply and demand and their putative opposite, the gift economy. In *The Effortless Economy of Science?* Mirowski moves beyond grand abstractions about science, truth, and democracy in order to begin to talk about the way science is lived and practiced today.

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