



# Defending Science-Within Reason: Between Scientism and Cynicism

By Susan Haack

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Sweeping in scope, penetrating in analysis, and generously illustrated with examples from the history of science, this new and original approach to familiar questions about scientific evidence and method tackles vital questions about science and its place in society. Avoiding the twin pitfalls of scientism and cynicism, noted philosopher Susan Haack argues that, fallible and flawed as they are, the natural sciences have been among the most successful of human enterprises-valuable not only for the vast, interlocking body of knowledge they have discovered, and not only for the technological advances that have improved our lives, but as a manifestation of the human talent for inquiry at its imperfect but sometimes remarkable best.

This wide-ranging, trenchant, and illuminating book explores the complexities of scientific evidence, and the multifarious ways in which the sciences have refined and amplified the methods of everyday empirical inquiry; articulates the ways in which the social sciences are like the natural sciences, and the ways in which they are different; disentangles the confusions of radical rhetoricians and cynical sociologists of science; exposes the evasions of apologists for religious resistance to scientific advances; weighs the benefits and the dangers of technology; tracks the efforts of the legal system to make the best use of scientific testimony; and tackles predictions of the eventual culmination, or annihilation, of the scientific enterprise.

Writing with verve and wry humor, in a witty, direct, and accessible style, Haack takes readers beyond the "Science Wars" to a balanced understanding of the value, and the limitations, of the scientific enterprise.

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## **Editorial Review**

From Publishers Weekly

Science has come under attack in recent years from philosophers and cultural critics who have described it as, among other sins, culturally determined, too often dependent on the biases of scientists. Haack, professor of philosophy and law at the University of Miami (Manifesto of a Passionate Moderate), takes a searching look at how science interacts with and is influenced by other areas of human endeavor. This year being the 50th anniversary of Watson and Crick's discovery of the structure of DNA, Haack discusses how their writing style and in particular their use of the pronoun "we" made their now famous papers stand out. Science often interacts with the law in courts' use of expert testimony on defendants' mental state or physical evidence. Haack reviews the fascinating history of this tentative dance between law and science, and how in recent years the legal system has struggled to determine what scientific ideas can be considered as accepted beyond dispute. Religion and the concept of "intelligent design" also come under scrutiny. This chapter doesn't quite give advocates of guided evolution a fair hearing; the author overlooks some of their more subtle arguments. Haack does thoroughly demolish many of the sillier attacks on science as an expression of male domination and Western oppression and the like. With one thought-provoking discussion after another, the book is not an easy read, but those interested in the history of science and science buffs will find it to their liking.

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### **Review**

"...Haack's clarity of thought is consistent throughout...a refreshing perspective." -- *Washington Times*, November 30, 2003

"...a readable treatment of the contemporary discussions of science and its place in our culture." -- *Research News & Opportunities in Science and Theology*, November 2003

"...a rewarding read... has a good deal of appeal as an exceptionally thoughtful treatment of a very important question." -- *Times Higher Education Supplement*

"...convincing on many of the issues." -- *The New Criterion*, November 2003

"...offers a fair and balanced appraisal of the scientific enterprise...Highly recommended." -- *Choice*, March 2004

"...summaries of complex positions without being simplistic or patronizing...She is analytic and colourful, learned and fun." -- *New Scientist*, September 20, 2003

"...thorough and detailed...an excellent source book, full of references and summaries of earlier discussions." -- *Endeavour*, June 2004

"The most balanced appraisal of the scientific enterprise that I have discovered...a marvelous book, one not to be missed." -- *Journal of Chemical Education*, June 2004

"This is a good book...an ambitious, wide-ranging book about science..." -- *Reports of the National Center for Science Education*, May-Aug., 2004

"insightful, stimulating, interesting...should appeal to scholars interested in the epistemology of science, science policy, and science wars." -- *SciPolicy* 2004

From the Publisher

Review by Science, July 2, 2004: "Reading DEFENDING SCIENCE is like having a lively after-dinner conversation with an intelligent reader of the science studies literature who has little patience for academic extravagance and an eye for the bon mot."

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### **From reader reviews:**

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#### **Kathleen Carroll:**

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