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What Science Knows: And How It Knows It

James Franklin

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To scientists, the tsunami of relativism, scepticism, and postmodernism that washed through the humanities in the twentieth century was all water off a duck's back. Science remained committed to objectivity and continued to deliver remarkable discoveries and improvements in technology.

In What Science Knows, the Australian philosopher and mathematician James Franklin explains in captivating and straightforward prose how science works its magic. He begins with an account of the nature of evidence, where science imitates but extends commonsense and legal reasoning in basing conclusions solidly on inductive reasoning from facts.

After a brief survey of the furniture of the world as science sees it—including causes, laws, dispositions and force fields as well as material things—Franklin describes colorful examples of discoveries in the natural, mathematical, and social sciences and the reasons for believing them. He examines the limits of science, giving special attention both to mysteries that may be solved by science, such as the origin of life, and those that may in principle be beyond the reach of science, such as the meaning of ethics.

What Science Knows will appeal to anyone who wants a sound, readable, and well-paced introduction to the intellectual edifice that is science. On the other hand it will not please the enemies of science, whose willful misunderstandings of scientific method and the relation of evidence to conclusions Franklin mercilessly exposes.

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