

*“This is an intensely ambitious and assertive book. The examples are wide-ranging, the arguments firmly wrought . . . It is an impressive contribution to a rapidly changing intellectual field. As a reader I have relished the challenge it mounts.”*

—Gillian Beer

*Cambridge University*

Is scientific theory really just a matter of persuasion? Do scientists merely invent rather than discover? Indeed, do brute facts of nature gain meaning only within a rhetorical context? Alan Gross’s boldly innovative book seeks answers to such stirring questions about the truth of science and the nature of truth.

Gross applies the principles of rhetoric to the interpretation of classical and contemporary scientific texts to show how they persuade both author and audience. This invigorating consideration of the way in which scientists—from Copernicus to Darwin to Newton to James Watson—establish authority and convince each other and us of the truth they describe may very well lead to a remodeling of our understanding of science and its place in society.

History, philosophy, and sociology are the academic disciplines that have traditionally focused on the sciences. The rhetoric of science differs from them in that it sees scientific knowledge not only as speculative but also as practical. The theories expounded in *Origin of Species*, for example, are speculative knowledge. From a rhetorical point of view, however, they are also practical knowledge, since Darwin used them to persuade fellow biologists to reconstitute their field.

Alan Gross is thoroughly versed in many of the scientific controversies he examines, and his argument is not one that seeks to denigrate the field. Rather, he deepens our understanding of science by demonstrating how its language works. The provocative notions sprinkled throughout this book will prompt discussion among scholars of various stripes, particularly those in speech, philosophy, English, history of science, science studies, and science itself.

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