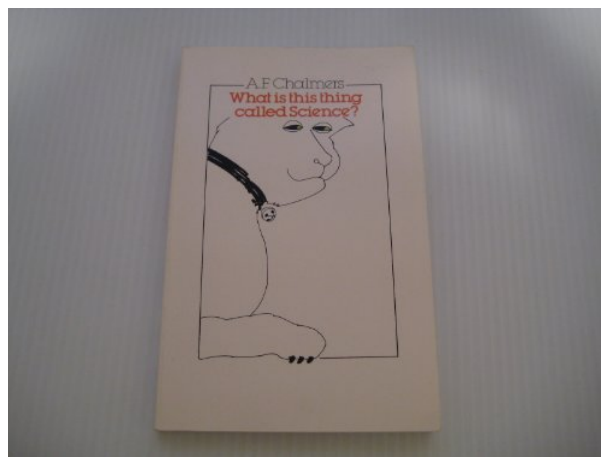
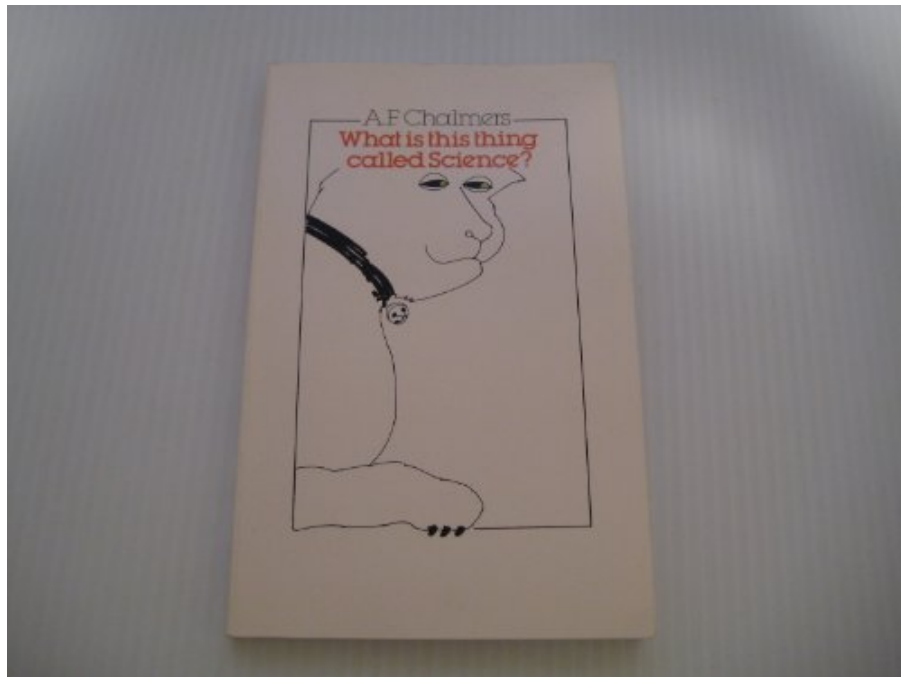


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AN ASSESSMENT OF THE NATURE AND
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Review

In this academic bestseller - indeed, one of the most widely read books ever written in the history and philosophy of science - Alan Chalmers provides a refreshingly lucid introduction to the philosophy of science in the twentieth century. -- Ronald L. Numbers, University of Wisconsin, Madison

About the Author

Alan Chalmers was born in Bristol, England and has a BSc in physics from the University of Bristol, an MSc in physics from the University of Manchester and a PhD in History and Philosophy of Science from the University of London. He has taught history and philosophy of science at the University of Sydney since 1971 and is now an Associate Professor there. He is the author of *Science and its Fabrication* (Open University Press, 1990), as well as the previous two editions of *What is this Thing Called Science?* and many articles on history and philosophy of science.

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Reviews of the previous edition: 'In this academic bestseller - indeed, one of the most widely read books ever written in the history and philosophy of science - Alan Chalmers provides a refreshingly lucid introduction ...Drawing on illuminating historical examples, he asks and answers some of the most fundamental questions about the nature of science and its methods' - Ronald L. Numbers, William Coleman Professor of the History of Science and Medicine, University of Wisconsin at Madison. 'Crisp, lucid and studded with telling examples ...As a handy guide to recent alarms and excursions (in the philosophy of science) I find this book vigorous, gallant and useful' - New Scientist. What is the characteristic that serves to distinguish scientific knowledge from other kinds of knowledge? What is the role of experiment in science? What is the role of theory in science? In clear, jargon-free language, the third edition of this highly successful introduction to the philosophy of science surveys the answers of the past hundred years to these central questions. The previous edition of this book, translated into fifteen foreign languages, has been thoroughly revised in the light of two decades of teaching experience on the part of the author, and has been brought right up to date. The text has been enriched by many new historical examples and the early chapters have been reorganised, re-ordered and amplified to facilitate the introduction of beginners to the field. The new edition includes new chapters on the following topics: the new experimentalism; the Bayesian approach to science, currently in vogue; the nature of scientific laws; and, recent developments in the realism/anti-realism debate. These changes will enhance the value of this book as a standard university text in the philosophy of science, not just on science and philosophy courses but also in the social and human sciences such as sociology and psychology, where the need is felt for an introduction to scientific method.

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Clear, Comprehensive and Friendly

By TiZ

Alan Chalmers's "What is this thing called Science?" is an introduction to the philosophy of science. While Chalmers reaches some of his own conclusions, the book generally digests theories in the philosophy of science with standard criticisms in a very friendly and unimposing manner.

This book is quite comprehensive, covering the nature and justification of scientific theories, theories about scientific progress and the realism/anti-realism debate, among other topics. It progresses chronologically through inductivism, falsificationism, Kuhn, Lakatos, Feyerabend and more contemporary theories.

Chalmers explains and critically evaluates the theories clearly and in some depth. He often illustrates his claims with examples from the history of science. The book is also well organised, and each chapter is concluded with suggestions for further reading.

The third edition of this book is significantly changed from the previous editions, including new chapters on Bayesianism, the new experimentalism, natural laws (I like Boyle's explanation; pity Chalmers dismisses it so quickly) and the realism/anti-realism debate.

"What is this thing called Science?" has remained popular for well over two decades. While there are many new alternatives available, I recommend this book for introductory courses in the philosophy of science and for anyone interested in the subject.

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

Solid Introduction

By R. Albin

This clearly written book is a very good introduction to philosophy of science. Based on the authors considerable experience with teaching this subject, it is aimed at advanced undergraduates and can be read profitably by any interested person. Chalmers point of departure is that philosophy of science is an effort to capture what is distinct and distinctly successful as a way of gaining knowledge. Chalmers begins with an examination of naive ideas of science based on simple empiricism, naive positivism, and induction. He shows these quickly and clearly to be misguided. This leads to a set of chapters investigating the idea that theory is the distinguishing feature of science. Chalmers has a nice set of chapters describing critically the approaches of Popper, Kuhn, and Lakatos, all of which are found to have some strengths. Chalmers is equally good on the defects of these approaches, all of which fail to capture crucial aspects of scientific knowledge and progress. A similar chapter is devoted to Paul Feyerabend's attack on scientific knowledge. Chalmers follows with chapters on other, recent approaches including Bayesian views and the "new experimentalism." The latter does much better at describing progression of scientific knowledge. Chalmers then concludes with chapters on the nature of scientific laws and a sensible discussion of realism versus anti-realism. A consistent feature of this book is use of historical example, particularly from physics, to explore philosophical issues. The bibliography is decent.

5 of 6 people found the following review helpful.

Introspection

By Thomas Kull

I disagree with Chalmers. He admits to the reader on page 169 that he believes the philosophy of science,

and therefore this book, is of no help to scientists. This claim he supports by stating his book primarily assaults our societal ideologies of science (i.e. either an unwavering association of science with truth, or an impenetrable opinion that science is simply a buffet of ideas to freely choose from). I agree with this statement, but I contend such ideologies exist significantly within the scientific community as well. Perhaps Chalmers assumes his writings won't be internalized by the practicing scientist. This assumption may be true, but my evidence of one data point (me) suggests perhaps scientists (especially apprentices like me) can gain from this book.

I recommend this book only to those practicing scientist who have the courage to allow Chalmers' microscope to examine what they believe and how they justify their existence.

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