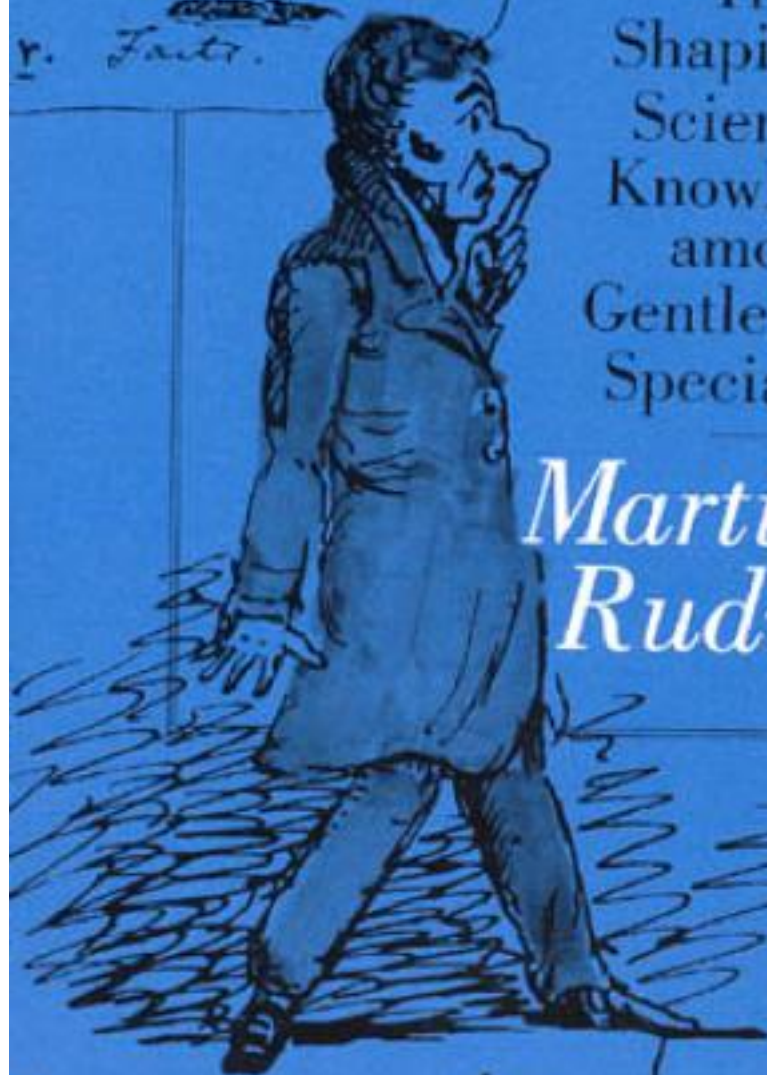


THE GREAT DEVONIAN CONTRO- VERSY

The
Shaping of
Scientific
Knowledge
among
Gentlemanly
Specialists

*Martin J.S.
Rudwick*

*Recommended Opinions
v. Facts.*



*lemen, is my nose.
we said you, among men without noses, you cannot be*

*My dear fellow, - you
generally may be very well,
you cannot be*

The Great Devonian Controversy: The Shaping of Scientific Knowledge Among Gentlemanly Specialists, Martin J. S. Rudwick, University of Chicago Press, 1988, 0226731022, 9780226731025, 528 pages. "Arguably the best work to date in the history of geology." David R. Oldroyd, Science "After a superficial first glance, most readers of good will and broad knowledge might dismiss [this book] as being too much about too little. They would be making one of the biggest mistakes in their intellectual lives. . . . [It] could become one of our century's key documents in understanding science and its history." Stephen Jay Gould, New York Review of Books "Surely one of the most important studies in the history of science of recent years, and arguably the best work to date in the history of geology." David R. Oldroyd, Science.

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Scientist of Empire Sir Roderick Murchison, Scientific Exploration and Victorian Imperialism, Robert A. Stafford, Jul 18, 2002, Biography & Autobiography, 308 pages. Sir Roderick Murchison was an eminent Victorian, as notable for his identification of the Silurian system in geology as for his patronage of David Livingstone and other

Science in Action How to Follow Scientists and Engineers Through Society, Bruno Latour, Jan 1, 1987, Science, 274 pages. Science and technology have immense authority and influence in our society, yet their working remains little understood. The conventional perception of science in Western

Proceedings of the Yorkshire Geological Society, Volume 10 , Yorkshire Geological Society, 1889, , ..

Fact and Method Explanation, Confirmation and Reality in the Natural and the Social Sciences, Richard W. Miller, 1987, Philosophy, 611 pages. In this bold work of broad scope and rich erudition, Richard W. Miller sets out to reorient the philosophy of science. By questioning both positivism and its leading critics

Application of Modern Stratigraphic Techniques: Theory and Case ..., Volume 94 Theory and Case Histories, Kenneth T. Ratcliffe, Brian A. Zaitlin, 2010, Science, 241 pages. .

The Culture of English Geology, 1815-1851 Science Revealed Through Its Collecting, Simon J. Knell, 2000, , 377 pages. .

Great Geological Controversies , A. Hallam, 1989, Political Science, 244 pages. This second edition of the author's account of celebrated controversies in geology embraces many of the important ideas that have emerged since the birth of the subject. The

Pennsylvanian correlations in the eastern interior and ..., Issues 17-20 , Harold Rollin Wanless, 1939, Science, 130 pages. .

The Growth of Biological Thought Diversity, Evolution, and Inheritance, Ernst Mayr, 1982, Science, 974 pages. An incisive study of the development of the biological sciences chronicles the origins, maturation, and modern views of the classification of life forms, the evolution of

Bursting the Limits of Time The Reconstruction of Geohistory in the Age of Revolution, M. J. S. Rudwick, Dec 1, 2005, Science, 708 pages. 'Bursting the Limits of Time' describes how the natural world, through the new sciences of geology & paleontology, came to be historicised during the Age of Revolution..

The Silurian Rocks of Britain Vol. I. Scotland, Benjamin Nieve Peach, John Horne, Jethro Justinian Harms Teall, 1899, , 749 pages. .

Big Science The Growth of Large-scale Research, Peter Galison, 1992, Science, 392 pages. .

Memoirs of William Smith, LL.D., Author of the 'Map of the Strata of England and Wales' By His Nephew and Pupil, John Phillips, Jun 2, 2011, Science, 176 pages. A portrait of a leading geologist whose work on the understanding of strata was an important contribution to the field..

Special Report - Geological Society of London, Issues 8-11 , Geological Society of London, 1977, Science, . .

"After a superficial first glance, most readers of good will and broad knowledge might dismiss [this book] as being too much about too little. They would be making one of the biggest mistakes in their intellectual lives. . . . [It] could become one of our century's key documents in understanding science and its history."—Stephen Jay Gould, New York Review of Books

This book can be read and enjoyed on several distinct but inter-related levels: as a great scientific thriller of ideas, as a riveting and amazingly detailed description of practical science "as she is made", as a landmark contribution to our understanding of the scientific method and finally as an insightful study of the economical, social and scientific factors which shaped science in the 19th century. Rudwick unearthed and collated an unprecedented mass of written material relating to the controversy in 1830s regarding the identification and interpretations of geological formations in Devon, which had far-reaching effects on the developments of geology. Armed with this material, he adopts the highly effective (though for a while unfashionable) approach of writing a coherent narrative of the events, in so far as they can be reconstructed, while scrupulously adhering to the principle of not importing hindsight into the narrative. This treatment is very effective and makes an important historiographical study into a generally accessible (and highly readable) book. Having told the tale, Rudwick proceeds to draw from it more general implications for our understanding of the process of scientific discovery. His conclusions present a welcome challenge to both extreme interpretations of science: as a "mere" unravelling of facts, and as "mere" social construct. In three words: entertaining, informative, superb!

This very interesting, well constructed, and well written book is an important case study of scientific progression. The subject is a 19th century controversy about stratigraphy in Southwestern England. To a large extent, Rudwick uses this topic as a test of Thomas Kuhn's famous saltatory model of scientific progression. While apparently recondite, this stratigraphic controversy reflected a crucial issue in 19th century geosciences. A major aspect of geology in the early 19th century was the effort to reconstruct geohistory. Methodologically, this was quite difficult. The major method was direct observation of strata exposed by outcroppings, riverbeds, cliffs, and mines. Since strata were often disturbed in complex ways by many geologic phenomena, this was a difficult task requiring great experience. As time went on, relatively sophisticated paleontologic analyses of fossil assemblages became an important aspect of stratigraphy. Following success with analysis of more superficial (younger) strata, geologists of this period set out to map the deeper strata. The controversy over the stratigraphy became a major controversy about the nature of remote geohistory, whether or not such reconstructions were actually possible, the methods and criteria needed for appropriate stratigraphic reconstruction, and higher level theories about geological change.

Rudwick opens the book with a nice, concise description of the state of the geosciences at the beginning of the controversy, the structure of the geology community in Britain, and a discussion of the status of the sciences in British society. Many of the major figures are introduced as well. This is followed by the majority of text, a detailed reconstruction of the controversy generated from Rudwick's careful analysis of the relevant scientific work and an extensive study of communications between the major (and many minor) actors based on their voluminous correspondence. This is an impressively non-anachronistic account, showing readers events as they unfolded to the participants. Throughout this section, Rudwick discusses not only the scientific aspects but also relevant aspects of social history.

Following the reconstruction of the controversy, Rudwick concludes with a pair of analytic chapters with insightful discussion of the sociologic and epistemic aspects of the story. Rudwick is particularly good on the interactions between personalities, social elements (both of the geologic community

and Victorian society), and the unfolding of the evidence. The transformation of the existing paradigm of stratigraphy and geologic research in the course of the controversy, and the epistemic value of data, though not a crude empiricist or realist interpretation, are the major themes. Scientists reading this book will find much that is familiar in Rudwick's account and devotees of Kuhn will find important aspects of his model undermined. Read more ›

anomaly April argument Austen Beche Beche's Belgium Bideford Bristol British Association Buckland Cambrian Carboniferous chison claimed Coal Measures conformable Conybeare Cornwall correlation Culm limestone Culm strata Devon controversy Devon limestones Devonian controversy Devonian interpretation Devonian system Devonshire distinctive Dumont earlier Eifel Elie de Beaumont equivalent fauna fieldwork Fitton formations fossil evidence fossil plants fossils gentlemanly geological map Geological Society geologists grauwacke Greenough Greywacke Ibid important later least London Lonsdale Lower Silurian Lyell major meeting Mountain Limestone Murchison to Sedgwick north Devon notebook Old Red Sandstone older rocks older strata opinion Palaeozoic paper Pembrokeshire Phillips Phillips's Plymouth published read at GSL region Rhineland rock type scientific Sedgwick and Murchison Sedgwick to Murchison sequence Silurian strata Silurian System southwest England species structure term terrain told Sedgwick Transition trough unconformity Upper Silurian Verneuil Wales Weaver Whewell Williams

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Synopsis: How is scientific knowledge created? Not simply by accumulating facts or testing hypotheses, argues Martin J. S. Rudwick. In his landmark study of the Great Devonian Controversy of the 1830s and 1840s, he shows that new knowledge is the product of intense rhetorical argument among a small group of gifted, dogged, ambitious researchers. As the most thorough description yet written of the way scientific communities formulate, debate, and resolve their problems, this book is an essential case study for historians, sociologists, and philosophers of science.

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