

HINDSIGHT AND POPULAR ASTRONOMY

There are many books that endeavor to bridge the gap between scientists and laymen, yet too many overemphasize the presentation of scientific findings as hard facts and end up alienating readers from the critical thinking processes involved in science.

Whiting attempts to break away from the norm in this revolutionary review of popular astronomy books written from 1833 to 1944. He examines these important works by acknowledged authorities in the field to see how they have stood the test of time. Where the luminaries have failed, he looks for clues that the layman reader could have used to raise doubts about what was being said. The aim of this highly accessible book is to develop tools for the non-scientist to evaluate the strange and marvelous results that astronomers report, in place of the highly-developed scientific and mathematical techniques available to the scientists themselves. A must-read for all science and astronomy enthusiasts.

Cover photograph of the Orion Nebula © European Southern Observatory, used here under a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported license. ESO Press Photo eso0421 was produced by Massimo Robberto (Space Telescope Science Institute) and Hännés Heyer and Henri Boffin (ESO). Drawings of the Orion Nebula published in books by Sir John Herschel in 1833 (left) and by Simon Newcomb in 1878 (right).

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