



Never Pure: Historical Studies of Science as if It Was Produced by People with Bodies, Situated in Time, Space, Culture, and Society, and Struggling for Credibility and Authority

By Steven Shapin



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Steven Shapin argues that science, for all its immense authority and power, is and always has been a human endeavor, subject to human capacities and limits. Put simply, science has never been pure. To be human is to err, and we understand science better when we recognize it as the laborious achievement of fallible, imperfect, and historically situated human beings.

Shapin's essays collected here include reflections on the historical relationships between science and common sense, between science and modernity, and between science and the moral order. They explore the relevance of physical and social settings in the making of scientific knowledge, the methods appropriate to understanding science historically, dietetics as a compelling site for historical inquiry, the identity of those who have made scientific knowledge, and the means by which science has acquired credibility and authority.

This wide-ranging and intensely interdisciplinary collection by one of the most distinguished historians and sociologists of science represents some of the leading edges of change in the scholarly understanding of science over the past several decades.



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Review

What makes his essays so enjoyable and alive... is their leaping range of reference, always running one step ahead and urging us to catch up.

(Jenny Uglow *New York Review of Books*)

Professor Shapin has a sense of humor, a good eye for an anecdote and the ability to turn a phrase.

(Katherine Bouton *New York Times*)

While it might not be for novices, anyone who is interested in how and why science enjoys a privileged position as a source of knowledge should read Shapin's take on the authority given to it vis-à-vis religion and morality, why it is a compliment to be both a gentleman and a scholar, and why it matters whether Newton ate chicken or Darwin farted.

(*Seed Magazine*)

An impressive work and one that scientists will benefit from reading. Shapin reminds us that... neither scientists nor science itself can be separated from the context of peoples' minds, bodies, cultures, societies. Expectations based on any other understanding are simply unrealistic.

(Sam Lemonick *Chemical and Engineering News*)

He is a graceful and engaging essayist, and the ample selection of essays in *Never Pure ...* affords an excellent basis for reflecting on what he has had to say about the life of science.

(Robert E. Kohler *Science*)

Never Pure will enrich the bookshelf of any historian of science.

(Katy Barrett *Endeavour*)

A highly labored style of writing is deployed to perform scholarly virtues that go by names like 'careful,' 'accurate,' and 'rich.'

(Steve Fuller *Aestimatio: Critical Reviews in the History of Science*)

About the Author

Steven Shapin is the Franklin L. Ford Professor of the History of Science at Harvard, and his books include *Leviathan and the Air-Pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life* (with Simon Schaffer), *A Social History of Truth: Civility and Science in Seventeenth-Century England*, and *The Scientific Revolution*. He has written for the *New Yorker* and writes regularly for the *London Review of Books*.

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