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WHERE THE TRUTH LIES

Franz Moewus and the Origins of Molecular Biology

by Jan Sapp, University of Melbourne

This absorbing account of a case of suspected fraud involving the tragic career of the molecular biologist Franz Moewus illustrates all that can go wrong in scientific knowledge making. The author follows Moewus's meteoric flight among the greatest scientists of the twentieth century to his denunciation as the perpetrator of one of the most ambitious cases of fraud in the history of science. He discusses the sociopolitical issues that helped bring Moewus's work to the center of intense scrutiny in the professional biological-science community, how the controversy was sustained for decades, and how it came to a close and was eventually expunged from the history of science.

The author reopens this case and writes Moewus into the history of modern science, not in an attempt to vindicate him but to present the methodological lessons that the controversy reveals to both scientists and science analysts.

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

HB at PB Price this is the PB SBN

ISBN 978-0521-047968



9780521047968