

Re: Orthography supporting sound changes?

Source: <http://sci.tech--archive.net/Archive/sci.lang/2006-01/msg01206.html>

- *From:* "Seán O'Leathlóbhair" <jwlawler@xxxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* 12 Jan 2006 04:40:54 -0800
-

Brian M. Scott wrote:

> On 12 Jan 2006 02:25:27 -0800, Seán O'Leathlóbhair
> <jwlawler@xxxxxxxx> wrote in
> <news:1137061526.982634.167620@xx>
> in sci.lang:
>
>> Colin Fine wrote:
>>> Seán O'Leathlóbhair wrote:
>
> [...]
>
>>>> Depends on the science. Mathematicians frequently study
>>>> why things don't happen. A famous example being
>>>> Fermat's Last Theorem. A huge amount of effort has
>>>> been expended over the years to prove that something
>>>> does not happen. Squaring the circle and trisecting
>>>> angles are other examples of a lot of effort spent on
>>>> proving something impossible.
>
>>> Umm. Maths is not a science (in any sense relevant to
>>> this discussion). A mathematician's "does not occur" is
>>> qualitatively different from a scientist's "does not
>>> occur".
>
>> Whether maths is a science is a tricky question.
>
> Not at all: Colin is absolutely right.
>
>> Universities cannot seem to agree on whether to give BAs
>> and MAs or BScs and MScs, some even let you choose.
>
> How universities choose to classify the subject is
> irrelevant to the discussion. (Indeed, it's largely an
> administrative decision.)

Fair point.

> [...]

Re: Orthography supporting sound changes?

- >
- >> Also, it is hard to draw a clear line between maths and
- >> physics.
- >
- > Actually, it isn't. The separation is very clear, despite
- > the fact that much mathematics was inspired by physical
- > questions and, conversely, much mathematics is used in
- > physics. The existence of non-Euclidean geometries, for
- > instance, is a purely mathematical result; that some of them
- > are useful in describing the spacetime in which we exist is
- > a matter for physicists.

Non-Euclidean geometries have as much chance of being "real" as Euclidean ones. They are both, at times, useful models of real things. How real either is, is a difficult philosophical question.

I saw a discussion recently which claimed that String Theory is viewed with suspicion by physicists because it was developed by mathematicians. If the people had been labelled physicists, it may be more welcome. The labels seemed arbitrary, the ones that developed it were labelled mathematicians but they could easily have been labelled physicists. (No claims on the validity of this, I think that I saw it in another newsgroup).

- >> Physics is surely the archetypal science. How about
- >> statements such as "You cannot travel faster than light"?
- >
- >> OK, a physicist's "cannot happen" is a bit weaker than a
- >> mathematician's but it is still a strong statement.
- >
- > It isn't the same kind of statement at all. The
- > mathematician's 'cannot happen' refers to a logical
- > impossibility within a well-defined abstract system. The
- > physicist's 'cannot happen' by no means has the force of a
- > logical impossibility.

The physicist's statement is nonetheless a strong statement and if a physicist said: "X cannot happen . . .", I would expect him to be prepared to justify his assertion. That is what I see as common between the mathematician's "cannot happen" and the physicist's "cannot happen". Of course, the justification is likely to take a different form but the justification of "cannot exceed the speed of light" is more mathematical than experimental.

- > [...]
- >
- > Brian

--

Seán O'Leathlóbhair

• *Follow-Ups:*

- ◆ *Re: Orthography supporting sound changes?*
◇ *From:* Brian M. Scott
- ◆ *Re: Orthography supporting sound changes?*
◇ *From:* Neeraj Mathur

• *References:*

- ◆ *Orthography supporting sound changes?*
◇ *From:* Joachim Pense
- ◆ *Re: Orthography supporting sound changes?*
◇ *From:* Helmut Richter
- ◆ *Re: Orthography supporting sound changes?*
◇ *From:* Peter T. Daniels
- ◆ *Re: Orthography supporting sound changes?*
◇ *From:* Aidan Kehoe
- ◆ *Re: Orthography supporting sound changes?*
◇ *From:* Peter T. Daniels
- ◆ *Re: Orthography supporting sound changes?*
◇ *From:* Aidan Kehoe
- ◆ *Re: Orthography supporting sound changes?*
◇ *From:* Peter T. Daniels
- ◆ *Re: Orthography supporting sound changes?*
◇ *From:* Aidan Kehoe
- ◆ *Re: Orthography supporting sound changes?*
◇ *From:* Peter T. Daniels
- ◆ *Re: Orthography supporting sound changes?*
◇ *From:* Aidan Kehoe
- ◆ *Re: Orthography supporting sound changes?*
◇ *From:* Peter T. Daniels
- ◆ *Re: Orthography supporting sound changes?*
◇ *From:* Seán O'Leathlóbhair
- ◆ *Re: Orthography supporting sound changes?*
◇ *From:* Colin Fine
- ◆ *Re: Orthography supporting sound changes?*
◇ *From:* Seán O'Leathlóbhair
- ◆ *Re: Orthography supporting sound changes?*
◇ *From:* Brian M. Scott

- Prev by Date: *Re: New Methodology on Analysis of Language Change*
- Next by Date: *Re: Foreign is foreign, right?*
- Previous by thread: *Re: Orthography supporting sound changes?*
- Next by thread: *Re: Orthography supporting sound changes?*
- Index(es):
 - ◆ *Date*
 - ◆ *Thread*