

Re: Are physicists arrogant ?

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Stan wrote:

I am new to these groups so I may be a bit naive. But I have subscribed to both sci.math and sci.physics and almost immediately noticed a substantial difference which kept me so far at an arm-length distance from this group:

While the mathematicians generally maintain good manners, the physicist surprisingly often label each other as 'naive', 'stupid', or even 'idiots'. The question is "why and who is responsible?"

Physicists still can't accept the simple fact that their idiot modern physics, rest mass, is inconsistent with observed evidence. So they spend all their time with astrologers, looking for news words to describe their diocy, like internal consistncy, indecodeable, unregisterability, un-non-Truth-afiability.

It is true that physics deals with the 'experimental truth' rather than the 'assumed' truth of mathematicians and that essentially everything in the Universe is physics. Some time ago, Laplace reminded the French King that even the existence of God was an interesting physical hypothesis. This, to some extent, explains why irrational passions are so much more a rule in physics than in math. But why the lack of basic manners ? What good does it do to anybody to call another person an idiot ?

Especially since those who offend often do not really know the trade. Let me give two examples:

Example 1:

There was a thread a short time ago where the guy who started it wanted

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to know whether the event of light (photon) absorption might not play a role in its emission. The thread was quite long and not all the answers were offensive. On the average, though, the unlucky soul was quite openly derided. Nobody, and I repeat NOBODY, told him that EXACTLY the same hypothesis had been already seriously discussed by men of indisputable standing and that it is still an unlikely but open possibility (Wheeler J.A., Feynman R.P., "Interaction with the Absorber as the Mechanism of Radiation", Rev.Modern Phys. 17,157,1945; Partridge R.B., "Absorber Theory of Radiation and the Future of the Universe", Nature 244,263,1973).

Example 2:

There is a repetitive and fully understandable curiosity about the speed of light. Very reasonable questions like is it really constant, is it really the maximum possible speed, how is it measured, how can an instrument measure it without being itself faster than light, etc. There were several threads on the topic. Again, lots of answers, half of them offensive, half of the other half not to the point. Nobody (as far as I could see) mentioned the current BIPM and NIST position according to which the speed of light is no longer subject to measurement because, since 1983, it is ASSUMED constant and its value is FIXED at EXACTLY 299792458 m/s ! Instead, together with the definition of 1 second (exactly 9192631770 periods of the radiation due to the transition between the two hyperfine levels of the ground state of Cesium 13) it is now used to CALIBRATE the length of 1 meter. Before 1983, meter was defined by a prototype deposited at BIPM in Paris and thus it made sense to measure the speed of light and there is a long and fascinating history of how that used to be done (simplifying, one starts from the failed attempts of Galileo and his servant sending each other light signals between two hills, proceeds to the observation of Jovian satellites and to the Fizeau's cogwheel-and-mirror machine, and ends up with the resonance frequencies of microwave cavities).

The original postulants could have ALL been given qualified answers. What they received, instead, was a treatment which probably sent them off to become politicians !!!

I am sorry for this entry being so long but I really felt hurt by what I read.

So the question is: WHAT'S WRONG WITH US PHYSICISTS ?

PS: For links on basic SI units and their definitions, start here:
www.ebyte.it/library/educards/siunits/TablesOfSiUnitsAndPrefixes.html