

Editorial

Physics in Perspective: New Features to Begin the Eighth Year

In 1932 Albert Einstein wrote a congratulatory note to a Dr. Solf. Einstein not only congratulated Solf, but also Lessing College and “all who are convinced of the need for close contact between science and art and the public which is hungry for spiritual nourishment.”¹ All people in all ages – the period around 1932 is a prime example – have been “hungry” for an inner life that transcends the humdrum and transitory experiences of daily life. The rising influence of religion in the current era is evidence of this timeless human need.

In the United States the avid quest for spiritual fulfillment has spawned megachurches with their arena-sized auditoria required to hold the thousands of people who attend. As the megachurches have taken their prominent places on the landscape, megahouses have become common throughout suburbia and between their megahouses and megachurches, parishioners transport themselves in megavehicles. That the widespread search for “spiritual nourishment” is accompanied by a pandemic desire for material things is troubling; even more, however, the apparent *need* for ostentatious things raises profound questions about the quality of the spiritual nourishment church-goers are receiving.

If spiritual nourishment is desired, material things are the equivalent of junk food. Further, if spiritual nourishment is to bring satisfaction, it must be balanced; that is, spiritual nourishment must nurture both the heart and the head. No matter how well the heart is nourished, it cannot silence the head. Just being alive brings observations and experiences that prompt wonder and with the wonder, questions – questions that look to the head for answers. A well-fed heart with an anemic head is akin to walking with a debilitating limp.

As Einstein suggested, art and science can enrich both the heart and the mind.

In the same congratulatory note cited above, Einstein goes on to write: “Specialization in every sphere of intellectual work is producing an ever-widening gulf between the intellectual worker and the non-specialist, which makes it more difficult for the life of the nation to be fertilized and enriched by the achievements of art and science.” The specialization that Einstein referred to in 1932 is truer today than it was then; consequently, the gulf between the specialist and the non-specialist is growing ever wider.

It has been and will continue to be the goal of *Physics in Perspective* to narrow the gulf between the “intellectual worker and the non-specialist” and thereby bring nourishment to both heart and head.

This journal, *Physics in Perspective*, is entering its eighth year. It was launched with the understanding that the contents of *Physics in Perspective* would be written and edited for an audience of non-specialists. We have tried to eliminate language that has meaning only to the inside specialist; we have avoided almost entirely the use of mathematical equations because we believe that, when forced to do so, scholars can use

words effectively. We have tried to bring articles to these pages that will interest a broad readership. With Einstein, the editors believe that the lives of citizens as well as the lives of their nations are enriched by the achievements of science.

As we begin the eighth year, two new features have been added. The first is called “Perspectives on Current Issues.” For this new feature we shall consider contributions that link past or present physics (or science more generally) with topics or issues of current interest. The pursuit of new physical knowledge takes place within the larger society, and within this larger society many influences – political, religious, and cultural – can directly affect physics. The first paper to be published in this new section of the journal is “What Makes A Theory Testable, or Is Intelligent Design Less Scientific Than String Theory?” by Robert Ehrlich. We invite articles that are appropriate for this new feature.

The second new section will complement the Book Review section and be called “Book Notes.” In this new section we shall give brief sketches of two kinds of books: new books that will not be reviewed and somewhat older books that we think readers ought to know about.

We receive books from publishers that we deem inappropriate for review in *Physics in Perspective*. Most often such books are far too specialized and designed for a narrow range of readers. In keeping with our mission to serve a broad audience of readers, we regard such books as inappropriate to review. We also do not review books that make extensive use of mathematics. Finally, we sometimes receive books that we regard as somewhat “light” for our readership. However, we believe that, from time to time, it would be worthwhile to bring some of these unreviewed books to the attention of our readers. Recently published Feynman books are examples.

Our usual practice is to review only current books; that is, books published within the past year. On occasion, however, we shall call attention to somewhat older books, published within the last two or three years, that we think are worthwhile and, as a service to our readers, will identify them in *Physics in Perspective*.

We receive frequent compliments and observations from readers about *Physics in Perspective*. We appreciate feedback from readers and encourage you to send us your comments. As the eighth year of *Physics in Perspective* begins, we hope readers will tell their friends about the journal and suggest that they also subscribe.

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1 Albert Einstein, *The World As I See It* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1949), p. 20.